# TRIENNIAL 98

## SOUTH CAROLINA STATE MUSEUM SOUTH CAROLINA ARTS COMMISSION

# TRIENNIAL 98

*April 25 - September 7, 1998*

**SOUTH CAROLINA STATE MUSEUM**

*301 Gervais Street*
*Columbia, SC*

**NATIONSBANK PLAZA**

*(site of TRIENNIAL 98 satellite exhibition)*
*1901 Main Street*
*Columbia, SC*

*Organized by the*
*South Carolina State Museum*
*South Carolina Arts Commission*

*Sponsored by*
*NationsBank*
*TrizecHahn Office Properties*
*South Carolina State Museum*
*South Carolina Arts Commission*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Exhibition catalogue photography by Hunter Clarkson, Alt-Lee, Inc., except Alison Collins, Jack Gerstner, Larry Merriman, Mark Sloan, Michelle Van Parys supplied by the artists; Tom Stanley and John Acorn by Jason Wallace

Artist portraits by Jason Wallace

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Carol Connor

Fran Perry

Gibbes Museum of Art

Greenville County Museum of Art

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Wayne Corley, McNair Law Firm

John Hall, SCANA

John Whitehead, Columbia Music Festival Association

# TRIENNIAL 98

*Exhibition Artists*

John Acorn
Russell Biles
Alison Collins
Jim Connell
David Detrich
Susan Filley
Jack Gerstner
J. Scott Goldsmith
Steven Hogue
David J.P. Hooker
Terry K. Hunter
Peter Lenzo
Kit Loney
Lee Malerich
Larry Merriman
Philip Mullen
Jane Allen Nodine
Marcelo Novo
Jorge Otero
Herb Parker
Cliffton Peacock
Teresa Prater
Edward Rice
Mary Ellen Rice
Virginia Scotchie
Susannah Sigaloff
Robert Silance
Mark Sloan
Tom Stanley
Aija Sterns
Joseph Thompson
Leo Twiggs
Michelle Van Parys
Mike Vatalaro
Frances Woodside

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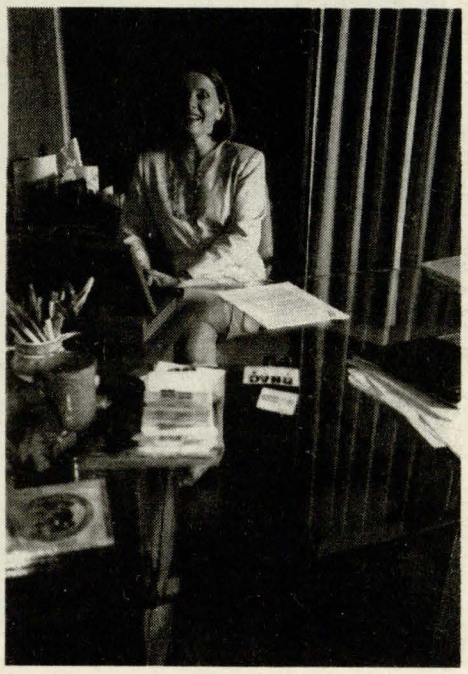
# FOREWORD

Nineteen ninety-eight marks the third anniversary of TRIENNIAL which was started in 1992 as a joint project of the South Carolina Arts Commission and the South Carolina State Museum. This year also marks the last presentation of TRIENNIAL in this century and provides an opportunity to reflect on the purpose and meaning of this project in the context of support for contemporary South Carolina artists.

The South Carolina Arts Commission remains committed to supporting individual artists at all levels of their careers. In addition to direct financial support for visual artists through grants and purchases for the State Art Collection, the Arts Commission, in partnership with visual arts presenters, mounts exhibitions as a means of building a strong support base for the state's contemporary artists.

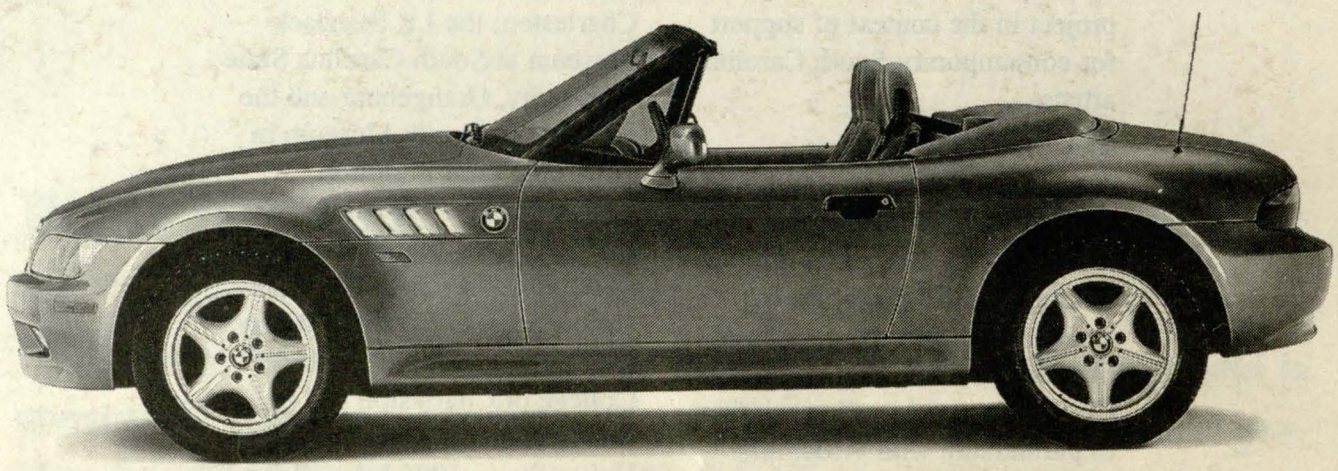


Since its inception in 1992, TRIENNIAL has attracted artists of the highest calibre and at all career levels. The exhibition and its accompanying publication serve the purpose of exposing the diversity of creative work to a large audience of traditional and non-traditional museum-goers and at the same time creating an infrastructure in which artists can find support for their work. The TRIENNIAL publication is intended to reach a broader audience — one that extends beyond the walls of the Museum — through its production and distribution as a tabloid format.

In addition to support for individual artists, TRIENNIAL has been a project that has allowed a forging of partnerships among and with some of the major visual arts presenters in the state. We are pleased that our flagship TRIENNIAL partner, the South Carolina State Museum, recognized the importance of this project and chose to remain a co-organizer and co-sponsor of TRIENNIAL since its was established. Our partnerships with the Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston; the I.P. Stanback Museum at South Carolina State University, Orangeburg and the Greenville County Museum in 1992; and with Winthrop Galleries, Winthrop University, Rock Hill; I.P. Stanback Museum, South Carolina State University, Orangeburg, University Gallery, USC-Sumter, Halsey Gallery, College of Charleston and the Rudolph E. Lee Gallery, Clemson University in 1995 have allowed portions of the TRIENNIAL exhibitions to travel to areas outside of Columbia.

This year, we welcome our newest TRIENNIAL partners - NationsBank and TrizecHahn (the new owners of NationsBank Plaza in Columbia). For over five years, NationsBank Plaza has been the site of the City Arts Series which was established to provide a forum in downtown Columbia to showcase the work of contemporary South Carolina artists in a corporate environment. A satellite exhibition of TRIENNIAL 98 will run concurrent with the exhibition at the State Museum. I hope that all of our combined efforts in presenting TRIENNIAL to the public can serve as a model for others in planning and implementing exhibitions in the future. Congratulations to the thirty-five artists included in TRIENNIAL 98.

*Suzette Surkamer is Executive Director of the South Carolina Arts Commission.*

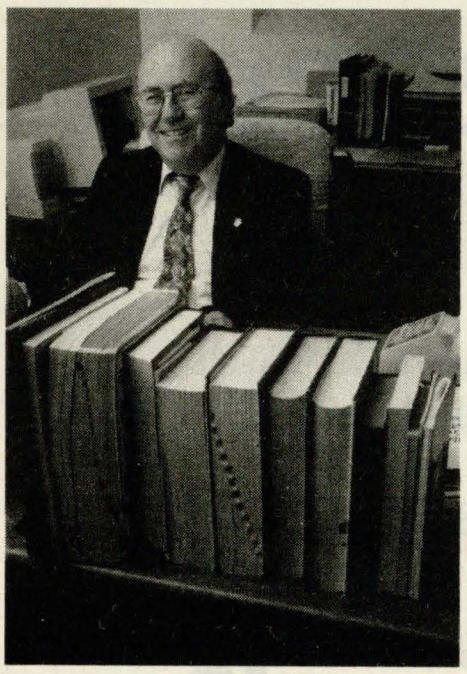


# SOUTH CAROLINA'S OWN

# FOREWORD

It has been my pleasure for nearly ten years to offer words of introduction to publications produced collaboratively by the South Carolina Arts Commission and the State Museum. Our two state agencies have enjoyed a partnership that has insured that the best in our state's contemporary art will be presented to the people of South Carolina. In fact, since our institution opened its doors in the fall of 1988, we have worked directly with the Arts Commission to produce eight exhibitions of contemporary South Carolina art and have had their financial support through grants for two others. This TRIENNIAL 98 project brings the number to nine, for our agencies once again have joined forces to promote the work of contemporary South Carolina artists and to increase the public's awareness and appreciation of our state's artistic culture.

This year's TRIENNIAL moves outside the walls of the museum to encompass a satellite component at NationsBank Plaza and a public opening reception as part of the Congaree Vista's Artista Vista celebration. This expansion of our programming into the community acknowledges the important role our museum plays in the area's economic growth and cultural vitality.

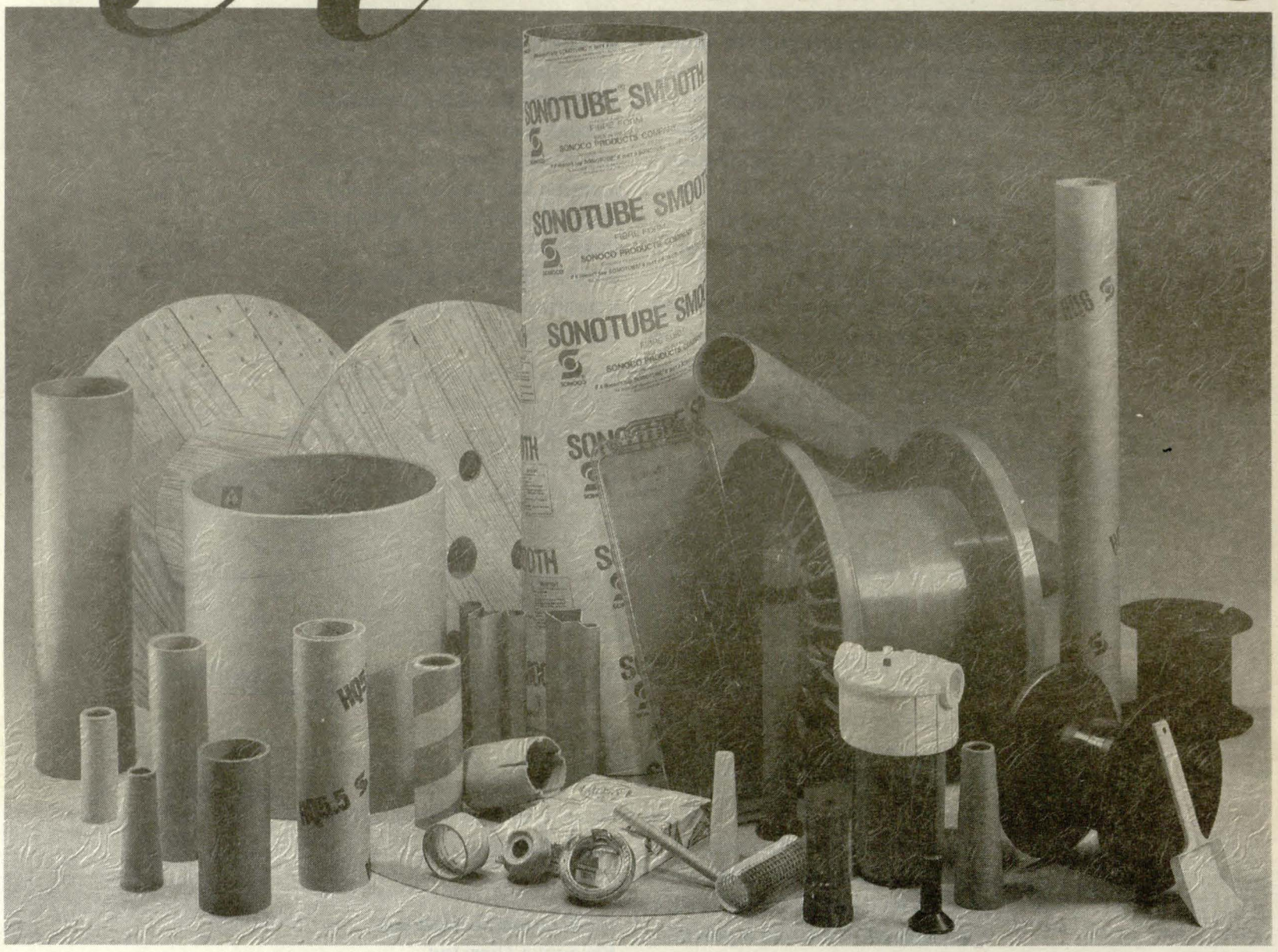


The artists included in TRIENNIAL 98 are to be congratulated for their contributions to the visual history of the state and thanked for their participation in this project, for it is their outstanding creative expression that we celebrate in this exhibition. We also acknowledge the corporate contributors who have consistently supported the TRIENNIAL tabloid publication through their purchase of advertising space. Of particular mention are NationsBank and TrizecHahn Office Properties, for their sponsorship of the TRIENNIAL 98 satellite show organized as a part of their City Art Series.

A project of this scope benefits from the shared resources of our two institutions, particularly from the expertise and energy of our combined staffs. I thank all those involved, especially Harriett Green and Lori Kornegay of the Visual Arts program of the Arts Commission, and Robin Waites and Polly Laffitte of the State Museum's Art Area. Their commitment to a consistently high quality product insures that TRIENNIAL 98 will be one of the year's most successful contemporary art presentations in South Carolina.

*Dr. Overton G. Ganong*
*Executive Director*
*South Carolina State Museum*

# The Art of packaging

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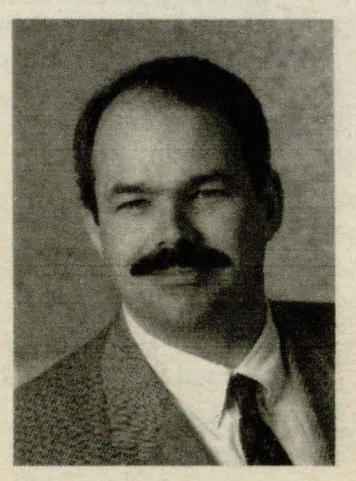
# FOREWORD – CITY ARTS SERIES



As the new owner and management of NationsBank Plaza, TrizecHahn takes pride in continuing the tradition of the City Arts Series. For six years, the building lobby has served as an alternative exhibition space to exhibit the work of South Carolina's contemporary artists. The arts program brings vitality to our corporate environment by stimulating dialogue and humanizing our work place.

We view the City Arts Series as an important service that we provide for our internal community of tenants and external community of visitors who frequent NationsBank Plaza on a regular basis. As a new corporation in Columbia, South Carolina, we are dedicated to being responsive to the needs of the community in which we operate.

By integrating art into the work place, TrizecHahn hopes its own efforts will garner support for other business and arts partnerships in Columbia and throughout South Carolina. Working in cooperation with our partners - NationsBank and the South Carolina Arts Commission - we hope that the City Arts Series at NationsBank Plaza will continue to add to the quality of life in our workplace as well as provide support for the arts and artists throughout South Carolina.

*Casey Wold*
*President*
*TrizecHahn Office Properties*

NationsBank is pleased to present the City Arts Series at NationsBank Plaza. We have long believed that a strong arts climate reflects a prosperous and growing community. As many of our communities are unable to provide strong arts support by themselves, it is important that corporations such as NationsBank fill the void. We believe in our commitment to the arts because it benefits everyone in the communities we serve.

We are particularly proud to support the presentation of the TRIENNIAL 98 satellite exhibition as part of the City Arts Series and offer our congratulations to the thirty-five artists featured in the exhibition.

*Joel A. Smith, III*
*President*
*NationsBank Carolinas*

# THE CURATORIAL EYE BLINKED

and six years passed. That is the way I felt as we began this TRIENNIAL 98 process. Has it really been that long since we organized the first TRIENNIAL, I asked? What identity has the exhibition developed in those years that might be reflected in this year's show? What does this show mean to the artists of our state? How does the show illustrate our commitment to promote, through exhibition and publication, the artists working in our state? The realization that this is the last such show of the decade, not to mention the millennium, gave me cause to reflect. Why did we start this program? What is its history?

In 1989 the State Museum hosted the last of a long line of annual exhibitions organized by the Arts Commission. The annual exhibition program was begun in 1976 to showcase the state's contemporary art. Not only was it a good exhibition venue for the artists, it was an opportunity to have their work purchased. The Arts Commission purchased work from the show for the State Art Collection. With that last exhibition, and the opening of the State Museum, the Arts Commission took a good hard look at several visual arts programs, most specifically the annual exhibition and the State Art Collection. A study committee was initiated to make recommendations, and the outcome was three-fold. Purchase for the State Art Collection would no longer be solely from the annual exhibition, the annual exhibition would become a triennial, and thematic shows would be organized in the years between. It was thought that an exhibition every three years, organized with the State Museum, would allow the time and resources necessary to produce a major exhibit and catalogue, thereby documenting the show and the work. The selection process also changed so that instead of a single juror, a panel of jurors select the artists for the show based on slide submissions, and the actual work is curated through studio visits. How has this concept played out in the last three triennials?

In 1992 the first TRIENNIAL was a broad-based survey and was proclaimed the "Show of Shows" by *The State* newspaper. Jeffrey Day, the newspaper's art critic, went on to say that with TRIENNIAL 92 "...the South Carolina Arts Commission and the State Museum prove they are a serious art force not just in this state but in the region.... No other museum in South Carolina has come close to this exhibit." (April '92). Thirty-six artists were selected, with an outstanding mix of media, from traditional painting and craft, to installation sculpture. Three artists chose installation sculpture, and from that impetus, we have seen sculpture, in particular site-specific work, emerge as a major element in our contemporary exhibition program at the State Museum. TRIENNIAL 92 traveled to the three major art museums in the state as a celebration of the Arts Commission's 25th Anniversary.

The second triennial was structured to focus more on emerging artists, those who may have been under-recognized or who had had few exhibition opportunities in our state or region. It was our intention with that show to exhibit a larger number of works per artist so that one could experience more of the individual's vision and intention. We also somewhat naively hoped to predict the next generation of

artists whose influences and art-making would have an impact on art production in the state into the next century. Selections from this show traveled to five university galleries in the state, bringing TRIENNIAL 95 to new audiences.

This third TRIENNIAL returns to a pure survey approach, with 35 artists represented by a select body of work. The show is a good mix of emerging, mid-career and established artists working in a variety of media and style. Of the 35 selected, eight have been in a previous TRIENNIAL, only one has made it into all three, and 26 artists have never before exhibited in a TRIENNIAL. Many of these 26 are considered newcomers to the state's art scene.

The process for choosing this show was an open call for entries with no thematic structure imposed on the selection. Yet the three of us who served as jurors must have had some sort of subconscious, subjective allegiance, for as I began to make studio visits to select the actual pieces for the show, an underlying unifying sensibility emerged. We seem to have chosen with an emphasis toward the figurative and still life. There is a predominance of images of people and of objects that serve as symbols. Communicating via our associations with the objects, these artists comment on contemporary life. There is a sense of the collector in much of the work. Found objects find themselves reinterpreted, particularly through photography and sculpture.

A strong sense of tradition underlies much of the work and, as would be hoped, there is innovation and experimentation as each artist pushes his chosen medium. This may be most evident in the work in clay, in which the traditional teapot form takes a variety of new looks as each artist approaches the material with his/her own vision.

Painting and sculpture are the dominant mediums, with 11 artists working in each "category." It is refreshing to see painting well-represented by many of the newcomers to the show. Three artists have chosen to do site-specific sculpture — Larry Merriman's work at NationsBank Plaza anchors that satellite site, providing dialogue as he juxtaposes his recycled materials with the lobby's opulent finishes.

It is my opinion that the TRIENNIAL serves well its intended purpose: to showcase the best in art of our time in South Carolina. In fact, it has surpassed our initial expectations. It has become known as a major opportunity for our state's artists to exhibit in a premier institution with an outstanding gallery space. It fits our mission to promote, through exhibition and publication, an appreciation of the art of our state, and no other institution produces as extensive a survey of contemporary work. Yes, it is a selection process and one that by its very nature will allow only a relatively small number to make the final cut. It is as fair and democratic as any jurying process. TRIENNIAL has included consistently high-quality contemporary work, providing a "snapshot" of the best our state has to offer. With this third TRIENNIAL, an identity has been established, one that lives up to its reputation as an exhibit that "finds the heartbeat of South Carolina's contemporary art scene." (*The State*, April '92).

*Polly Laffitte*
*Chief Curator of Art*
*South Carolina State Museum*

| TRIENNIAL 92 | TRIENNIAL 95 | TRIENNIAL 98 |
|---|---|---|
| G.M. Bagwell | Aldwyth | John Acorn |
| Aaron Baldwin | Matthew Bynum | Russell Biles |
| Tarleton Blackwell | Margaret Tallon Chalmers | Alison Collins |
| Dexter Buell | Debbie Cooke | Jim Connell |
| Jim Buonaccorsi | Vinh T. Dang | David Detrich |
| Clay Burnette | Jason A. Forrest | Susan Filley |
| Stephen Chesley | J. Scott Goldsmith | Jack Gerstner |
| Bruno Civitico | Peter Lenzo | J. Scott Goldsmith |
| Sydney Cross | Lee Malerich | Steven Hogue |
| Heidi Darr-Hope | Phil Moody | David J.P. Hooker |
| Jamie Davis | William P. Norris | Terry K. Hunter |
| Debra Durst | Shane Patterson | Peter Lenzo |
| James Edwards | Quashie | Kit Loney |
| David Freeman | Virginia Scotchie | Lee Malerich |
| Mary Gilkerson | Dan W. Smith | Larry Merriman |
| Jean Grosser | David London Tillinghast | Philip Mullen |
| Mary Jackson | Tommy White | Jane Allen Nodine |
| Larry Jordan | Leeanna Yater | Marcelo Novo |
| Lee Malerich | Bingjian Zhang | Jorge Otero |
| Larry Merriman | | Herb Parker |
| Jane Allen Nodine | | Cliffton Peacock |
| Bill Norris | | Teresa Prater |
| Jorge Otero | | Edward Rice |
| Colin Quashie | | Mary Ellen Rice |
| Pedro Rodriguez | | Virginia Scotchie |
| Lyn Bell Rose | | Susannah Sigaloff |
| Richard Rose | | Robert Silance |
| Gregory Schmitt | | Mark Sloan |
| Dan Smith | | Tom Stanley |
| James M. Steven | | Aija Sterns |
| Gunars Strazdins | | Joseph Thompson |
| Michael Thunder | | Leo Twiggs |
| Leo F. Twiggs | | Michelle Van Parys |
| Mike Vatalaro | | Mike Vatalaro |
| Thea Weiss | | Frances Woodside |
| Jan Welborn | | |

# SURVEYING THE LANDSCAPE

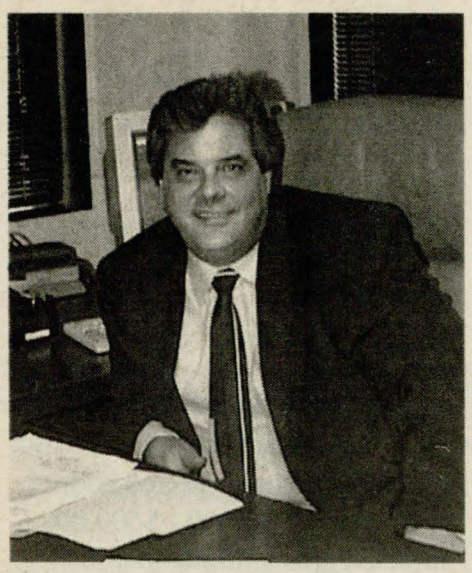
Imagine a perfect artworld. It might resemble a world in which artists are truly embraced and held in reverence; where museums can boast of record breaking attendance; where funding for the arts, at all levels, in both the public and private sectors is a given; where art galleries in greater numbers could represent as many artists as there are in order to help ensure their financial success in the marketplace; and where the arts are truly integrated into the psyche of every child and into the life of every adult. This world might resemble an art utopia - where the power and prestige of art is equal to or greater than any other industry; where diversity of issues and ideas are welcomed and accepted if for no other reason than to acknowledge that we live in a society that is characterized by differences rather than by similarities.

The fact is that this perfect artworld does not exist here in South Carolina or anywhere else. Instead, what we have is some acknowledgment that art and artists play a marginal role in the issue of quality of life; that museums are faced with the constant challenge of luring the public through their doors; that the threat of abolishing the NEA could have a crippling effect on the arts; that the private sector has not fully realized its true potential as patrons of the arts; that only a small percentage of artists can claim making a living solely as full time artists; that arts education has not been fully integrated into the basic curriculum in all schools in order to ensure a more complete education for young children and that diversity does not necessarily equal parity.

The state of the arts in South Carolina lies somewhere in between the reality of a thriving arts community and a disillusioned languishing ideal. We boast of public support for the arts and can point to good examples to argue this position. We look at the increase in exhibition opportunities for artists and explain it in terms of a burgeoning gallery scene. We see new artists moving to the state and attribute that to the state's nurturing infrastructure. We witness the business community taking responsibility for supporting the arts and then label them good corporate citizens. We enjoy the products of creative endeavors and formulate opinions to create constructive dialogue in the name of criticism. We challenge the choices and decisions that are made from an institutional viewpoint and wonder why without looking at the larger issues that dictate those decisions.

In spite of the insurmountable odds of achieving some semblance of a utopic society, the arts in South Carolina are alive and well in cultural repositories, artists' inner sanctums, schools, corporate environments, outdoor spaces, private homes and in academia throughout the state. Individually and jointly, these entities contribute to a vibrant visual arts community replete with the daring and innovative; traditional and contemporary; the ordinary and the extraordinary.

The vibrancy in the visual arts community has steadily been on the rise in the last two decades. Some visible signs of the time - the institutional changing of the guards; the influx of artists into the state; cultural pluralism; the changing nature of corporate sponsorship; the increase in opportunities for visual artists and the decentralization of arts programming- have helped create an infrastructure capable of sustaining a healthy visual arts climate. In the visual arts, the



Robert Arquilla, Vice President of Administration for Laidlaw Environmental Services (LES) chairs the Art Acquisitions Committee for LES.

cultural climate has undergone some transformations that bear recognition and acknowledgment.

### THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

In the last twenty years, the visual arts community has seen a true changing of the guard in art leaders. While individuals such as John Craft and Walter Hathaway (former directors of the Columbia Museum of Art); Jack Morris (former director of the Greenville County Museum of Art); Charles Wyrick (former director of the Gibbes Museum of Art); David Sennema (former director of the South Carolina State Museum); David Van Hook and Nina Parris (former curators of the Columbia Museum of Art) are no longer a part of the visual arts scene in South Carolina, their contributions to advancing the arts in this state are a major part of our cultural inheritance. Some new and not so new leaders in the visual arts — Sal Cilella (director of the Columbia Museum of Art); Paul Figueroa (director of the Gibbes Museum); Tony Ganong (director of the South Carolina State Museum); Lynn Robertson (director of McKissick Museum); Tom Styron (director of the Greenville County Museum of Art) and the respective curators of these institutions — Bill Bodine; Angela Mack; Polly Laffitte; Jay Williams and Martha Severens — are, in similar fashion, continuing the tradition of impacting on the visual arts history of this state.

Strong curatorial leadership has emerged from the ranks of college and university art galleries and museums through efforts by curators Tom Stanley (Winthrop University); Mark Sloan (College of Charleston); Frank Martin (South Carolina State University) and David Houston (Clemson University). Risk-taking innovative projects such as the nature-based sculpture program at Clemson University and the Art Guys exhibition in 1997 at Halsey Gallery, College of Charleston, provide freshness of vision that is a necessary ingredient for a healthy arts environment.

### BUILDING A NEW AUDIENCE FOR THE ARTS

Visual arts programming, once the purview of cultural organizations, has gone beyond the walls of traditional presenters into a truly public sphere. Museums and galleries now share the spotlight with restaurants, libraries, building lobbies, bookstores, gardens and parks. It is becoming more of a common occurrence to see art gracing the walls of a local restaurant or to visit a place of business and see some level of support for the arts. Visual arts "programs" are located on the world wide web as virtual exhibitions, thus adding to a global development of audiences.

### ART INC. - INCORPORATING ART

Corporate philanthropy in the 1970s and 80s in South Carolina indicated a strong base of support for the visual arts. The much anticipated Annual Springs Industries Traveling Exhibition was considered for many years, a major exhibition in this state. Today the most visible evidence of Spring Industries' efforts in this state since its discontinuance of the exhibition program and its decision to support photography projects of national significance, is its permanent collection which includes works by South Carolina artists. The Seibels Bruce Annual Watercolor exhibition (now defunct) supported the efforts of watercolor organizations and furthered the cause of promoting this medium while establishing its own corporate collection.

The groundwork for this strong interest in supporting the visual arts can also be attributed to the efforts of companies such as South

*In■Flux* exhibition at NationsBank Plaza, Columbia

Carolina National (now Wachovia Bank of South Carolina) which not only operated a corporate gallery on Main Street (now defunct) but which over a twenty-year period amassed the largest corporate collection of works by contemporary South Carolina artists and in 1991, sponsored the gallery that bears its name at the Richland County Public Library in Columbia. Carolina First's growing collection of works by contemporary South Carolina artists counts among the number of newly-formed companies dedicated to supporting the arts through the establishment of a corporate collection.

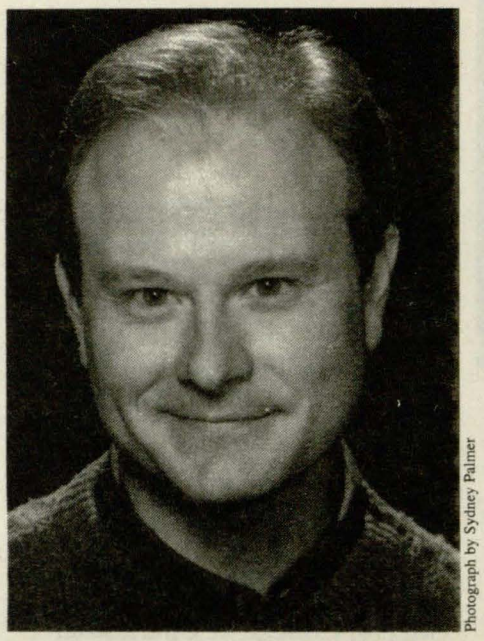
With greater frequency, corporations are issuing calls for submissions from artists as they begin their own corporate art programs. In 1998, when Laidlaw Environmental Services, Inc., issued a call to emerging artists whose works address environmental issues, it made a daring move. In 1997, Policy Management Systems Corporation announced its plans to start a corporate collection and made the decision to support artists at all career levels. Kennedy, Covington, Lodbell & Hickman, a Charlotte-based law firm with a regional office in Rock Hill, supported the purchase of works by South Carolina artists instead of following the firm's practice of purchasing works by artists from all over the country.

Corporations are making their marks in other ways. In addition to the building of collections and the sponsorship of exhibitions in traditional settings, corporations are playing an active role in developing and implementing their own exhibition programs. Kennedy, Covington, Lodbell & Hickman, located in the First Union Building in downtown Rock Hill, initiated an exhibition series as a companion project to its acquisitions program. NationsBank and MetLife (then owner of NationsBank Plaza) established the City Arts Series at NationsBank Plaza in 1992 and continues to host exhibitions, with support of the Plaza's new owner, TrizecHahn Office Properties and NationsBank. The extent to which corporations are creating a presence for their own program is exemplified in the activities occurring as part of the City Arts Series at NationsBank Plaza which has been the host of exhibitions such as *Catawba Pottery: Legacy of Survival/ 7 Master Potters* which was the most comprehensive exhibition of Catawba Pottery; *Merton D. Simpson: The Journey of an Artists*, organized by the Gibbes Museum of Art (adapted for its presentation at NationsBank Plaza) and TRIENNIAL 98 satellite exhibition.

## WHEN OPPORTUNITIES KNOCK

Predicting the types of opportunities that may arise for artists would suggest a predisposition for seeing into the future. As art administrators, we welcome sudden and unexpected opportunities and try to react and respond to them in a responsible manner. Sometimes these opportunities come without warning and oftentimes without much time to plan. In recent years, a flurry of opportunities have presented themselves to advance the cause of supporting contemporary artists.

The increase in financial opportunities for artists – another sign of the times – has characterized the last year and a half in the visual arts in South Carolina. These opportunities have come



Photograph by Sydney Palmer

Rusty Sox, Chairman of the Art Selection Committee for the South Carolina Archives & History Center Percent for Art Project.

from the public and private sectors in the form of both commissioned works and the purchase of existing works. The South Carolina Department of Archives and History announced its plans to set aside funds, in excess of $70,000, to commission and buy existing works for the new South Carolina Archives and History Center on Parklane Road in Columbia more than a year ago at When Opportunities Knock which was sponsored by the South Carolina Arts Commission in February 1997. After eleven months, three works have been commissioned (Tarleton Blackwell, Linda McCune and Gwylene Gallimard & Jean-Marie Mauclet) and are well on the way to being completed and an additional work has been purchased (Lyn Bell Rose). The selection process, still underway, will continue after the move to the new center.

In similar fashion, the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation announced a $40,000 - $50,000 commission for a Fallen Firefighter Monument sited for the South Carolina Fire Academy located on Monticello Trail in Columbia and the African-American History Monument Commission developed and laid out its plan to commission a monument for the State House grounds that is intended to honor South Carolina African - Americans. The projected budget of between $350,000 - $500,000 attracted artists throughout this country as well as other parts of the world. Tri-County Technical College in Pendleton, repeats its previous performance from the late 80s and is again setting aside funds ($15,000) to purchase works for its newly built Health Education Building on the campus.

The General Services Administration Percent for Art Project for the, not yet constructed, Matthew J. Perry, Jr., Federal Court House in Columbia was also announced at When Opportunities Knock. Plans are now moving forward with some expected announcement to come in the near future.

Among, the private sector, Policy Management Systems Corporation (PMSC) with a $25,000 budget for its art acquisitions program, also announced plans to start a corporate collection at When Opportunities Knock and on February 6, 1998 eight days shy of the anniversary of its announcement, held an Art Gala to honor the artists whose works were collected in the first year — Larry Lebby, Rebecca Davenport, Lyn Bell Rose, Carl Blair, Ray Davenport, William Halsey and a large scale commissioned work (still in the planning stage) by Mary Edna Fraser.

In March 1998, Laidlaw Environmental Services Inc., unveiled its plan to start a collection with a budget of $50,000 annually for three years with a focus on artwork that addresses the function of the company. Laidlaw joins the growing number of corporations in this state dedicated to providing a nurturing environment for the arts.

## THE MOVERS, SHAKERS AND DECISION MAKERS

(A) A call to artists is issued. (B) A committee is assembled. (C) Materials are reviewed and evaluated. (D) Decisions are made and works are purchased. Starting at point (A) and arriving at point (D) can be a perplexing and sometimes frustrating journey. Between points, questions are raised about the budget, criticism is voiced about the timeline and concerns are made about the possible inclusion/exclusion of certain groups of artists. Nonetheless, the ultimate reward of completing a project and announcing the results make the journey worthwhile.

Assembling a group of individuals to form a committee can be a challenge. The committee does not have to function as a well-oiled machine but the process must in order to assure fairness in the review and evaluation stages of the project. In forming a selection committee, consideration must be given to levels of expertise in the arts and other areas relevant to the project, position of individuals within the organization/ corporation, geographic location and diversity in gender, race and aesthetic proclivity. The usual suspects on the committee — art professionals — are becoming more like adjuncts rather than essentials. They compliment the committee by providing a context for aesthetic considerations and technical issues and in many ways are relied upon by other committee members, less knowledge about the arts, for guidance. Committees making decisions for cultural organizations are generally weighted in the opposite direction.

Featured left to right, Larry Lebby, Pat Wilson, Chair of the South Carolina Arts Commission Board of Commissioners and member of the Art Acquisitions Committee for PMSC's Corporate Collection and Tim Williams, Chairman of PMSC's Art Acquisitions Committee.

The State Art Collection Acquisitions Committee, for example, maintains a stronghold for including primarily arts professionals with one committee member being a layperson knowledgeable about the arts. The balance achieved, through a thoughtful selection of committee members and a strong chairman, symbolizes the establishment of a common ground where oftentimes, intuition and reasoning meet.

The increase in exhibition spaces around the state — another sign of the times — supports the visual arts activities of the state by providing additional exhibition venues for artists outside of major urban areas. The Arts Center in Rock Hill, the Self Family Arts Center in Hilton Head, Bowie Fine Arts Center, Erskine College in Due West, USC -Sumter Gallery and the Elizabeth Stone Harper Gallery at Presbyterian College in Clinton serve artists from around the state.

The quest for an art utopia, while unrealistic, provides an interesting sidebar to the realities of living in a competitive fast moving world. We do not know where we will be as we approach the end of this century but chances are the arts will be healthy and soaring to new limits. As "mavens and purveyors" of artistic endeavors and products, the arts community — arts administrators, artists and art enthusiasts — is duty bound to help ensure that a comfortable level of arts activities are sufficiently integrated into the mainstream and grassroots of South Carolina's diverse community.

***Harriett Green is the Visual Arts Director for the South Carolina Arts Commission.***

# REFLECTIONS AND RANDOM AFTERTHOUGHTS OF A JUROR OF TRIENNIAL 98

The TRIENNIAL is striking in its sophisticated divisions of humanistic concerns. Like so many of their contemporaries, South Carolina artists are preoccupied with narrative subjects. They weave time and angst through the mesh of personal history. Place does not really seem important.

This jury continued the tradition of selecting artists with diverse aesthetic grounding, gender and race. Does this add to the validity of the selections?

My assumption is that one would want a variety of aesthetic points of view represented in the resulting exhibition. The selection of the jury could not, therefore, be taken lightly. What then do I represent as a juror for this statewide triennial?

Juries are often made-up of people sharing similar education, background and professional standing, although their cultural heritage differs. This sometimes results in like-minded juries selecting works that meet their collective aesthetic. It then becomes the curator's responsibility to envision the "look" of the exhibition and to see that it meets or satisfies the mission and goals of the hosting institution.

Having like-minded jurors calls into question the validity of the "one-man, one-vote" tradition in jury decisions. This seemingly correct and innocent tradition may not always work in favor of the "desired" inclusive outcome.

The three of us have been educated and socialized as Americans. But each of us has our own special heritage.

Jurors are selected for different reasons. One was asked because of her expertise in contemporary art issues on a national level. A more local perspective was provided by a second juror. I was sought because of my connection with the Southeastern region. Was I also selected to fill the "minority" juror role? Does it matter? Did anything change?

Political correctness in the choice of jurors does not ensure the diversity one might desire.

How "objective" is the selection process? We live in a world of perceptions that play on our ideas of reality. Does the traditional process, centered as it is on a majority vote ensure inclusiveness?

Three people vote. The two agreeing votes hold sway over the odd vote. Simply put, "two votes, you are in." Time pushes consensus and time limits dialogue.

Selections are expected to be based on the quality of the art presented in the slides. Quality representations of a given community or a given aesthetic orientation often lose out in the two-to-one throw down. That's how the cookie crumbles. Majority wins.

The lack of quality or quantity of submissions from a given community results in fewer inclusions from that community, and of those, some of the same artists are selected again. How do we attract new artists?

Context and/or cultural affinities are rarely discussed. This means that the issue of quality can sometimes be set aside or overlooked in favor of personal likes and dislikes.

We do not respond to art based solely on clues from the formal qualities of a work - color, texture, shape, etc. We respond as much, I think, from culturally based references grounded in our individual social experiences. Each of us has a store of automatic responses keyed to our psychic, emotional and social selves. Sometimes during the process I sensed that those down the table from me didn't connect with a given work. One or two times there were images of a subject and a context that represented a text that it seemed only I knew.

As Americans, we have a basically Eurocentric orientation to the world. However, today many artists make use of ideas and imagery outside the western aesthetic. This sometimes makes for work that can be jarring enough to block an intended poetic reading. Subject matter from the "black experience," for instance, is sometimes problematic in this way. I can relate to just about every genre and period of Eurocentric art with ease and can also identify with work that comes from an Afrocentric perspective. Is this because of some special bicultural sensibility peculiar to my ethnic-based experience in America? Do others have this bicultural eye? Shouldn't they be expected to have it?

*Edward Spriggs*
*Director and chief curator,*
*Hammonds House Galleries and*
*Research Center of African*
*American Art, Atlanta, Georgia.*

# JUROR'S STATEMENT

The thirty-five artists selected for TRIENNIAL 98 constitute a remarkably diverse group. Works range from two-dimensional paintings, drawings, and photographs to three-dimensional sculptural objects as well as mixed-media installations that expand traditional categories. The selected artworks are as varied in style and conceptual approach as in media and technique. This spectrum of artmaking activity may be similarly wide-ranging in various states and regions of the country. Upon closer consideration, however, several dominant characteristics and strengths emerge that distinguish the current state of contemporary art in South Carolina.

A large proportion of the works in TRIENNIAL 98 are figurative or representational including Cliffton Peacock's paintings of figures; Marcelo Novo's autobiographical, surrealistic paintings; Edward Rice's architectural images; Kit Loney's torsos that combine weaving and drawing; Lee Malerich's embroidered compositions; and Mark Sloan's color photographs of objects stored in museums. John Acorn's hanging camouflage suits and Alison Collins' steel garments focus on clothing as a metaphor for the human body.

A strong craft tradition is exemplified by the ceramics of Jim Connell, Susan Filley, and Mike Vatalaro, all of whom experiment with and extend the forms of traditional functional pottery. Several artists are distinguished by their use of humor or satire. For example, Russell Biles' ceramic sculptures, inspired by his children's development, play with stereotypical representations in popular culture that distort more realistic perceptions of childhood; and Scott Goldsmith's paintings which incorporate found objects that encourage us to look deeper into our own everyday lives.

Large-scale, ambitious, site-specific installations are represented by Jack Gerstner's nature inspired work, Joseph Thompson's mechanical sculptures and Larry Merriman's volumetric cardboard constructions. Jane Allen Nodine's computer-manipulated photo/drawings explore new technologies; whereas socio-political content is embedded in Leo Twiggs' batik flags and Susannah Sigaloff's powerfully expressionistic paintings of mythic women or anti-heroines. Formal abstraction and cool conceptualism are rare.

All of the participants exhibit a serious commitment to their artwork. The exhibition includes young artists, who are just out of art school, alongside older, more established figures in the state. The contemporary art scene in South Carolina seems to be greatly enriched by the infusion of artists who have moved here from other parts of the United States and from other countries (some of whom came to study and others to teach in college and university art departments) as well as by the wealth of artists who are deeply rooted in the area. I was gratified to have the opportunity to view works by so many highly accomplished artists and to become familiar with this spirited and thriving artistic community.

*Judith Tannenbaum is the Associate Director and Curator of the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.*

Mark Tansey, American, b. 1949, *Purity Test*, 1982, Oil *on Canvas*, 72"x96", Collection of the Chase Manhattan Bank, N.A., Art Program, New York

# HEROIC PAINTING

This exhibition of work by seven contemporary artists will demonstrate the continued existence and vitality of painting in the Grand Manner. During the 19th Century, particularly in Europe, artists adopted the method of painting in a large scale to give added importance to contemporary issues. This technique is still being used by artists such as Mark Tansey and Vincent Desiderio to give added weight and meaning to topics of modern-day concern. The scale of these paintings will dramatically show off the new museum's special exhibition galleries while, at the same time, bringing the work of these important artists to our visiting public.

## July 18 - September 20, 1998

This exhibition is made possible by a generous grant from

**NationsBank®**

**Columbia Museum of Art**

This exhibition was organized by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Sara Lee Corporation is the corporate sponsor for this exhibition. The Columbia presentation is made possible by a generous grant from NationsBank.

# TRIENNIAL 98

## EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

## JOHN ACORN

*Pendleton*
*Born Paterson, NJ, 1937*

*As a Lure No. 1*, 1996, wood, metal, cloth, 9' x 3' x 2'

Like larger-than-life silhouetted sentinels, John Acorn's sculptures stand as testaments to contemporary society. They address issues of isolation and segregation. Some comment on America's fascination with leisure activities. Others are foils for Acorn's sometimes dark sense of humor. All are a part of his series known as *Camouflage Man*.

Inspired by a local hardware store's advertisement for a hunting suit, this topic has captivated Acorn for the last several years. The result is a large body of figurative work based on a consistent form upon which he experiments with materials and surface application. The ideas develop naturally as he incorporates symbols or shapes that carry universal meaning, endowing each form with a distinctive personality.

Acorn's response to his subject is insightful. "I am not interested in hunting as a sport but find that the idea of hunting is intriguing as a reflection upon both our human nature and the natural world. The natural world uses camouflage as a means of protection against enemies. Man imitates this function but also extends it to aid in his desire to kill."

*Daddy's Babies*, 1995-97, polychromed ceramic

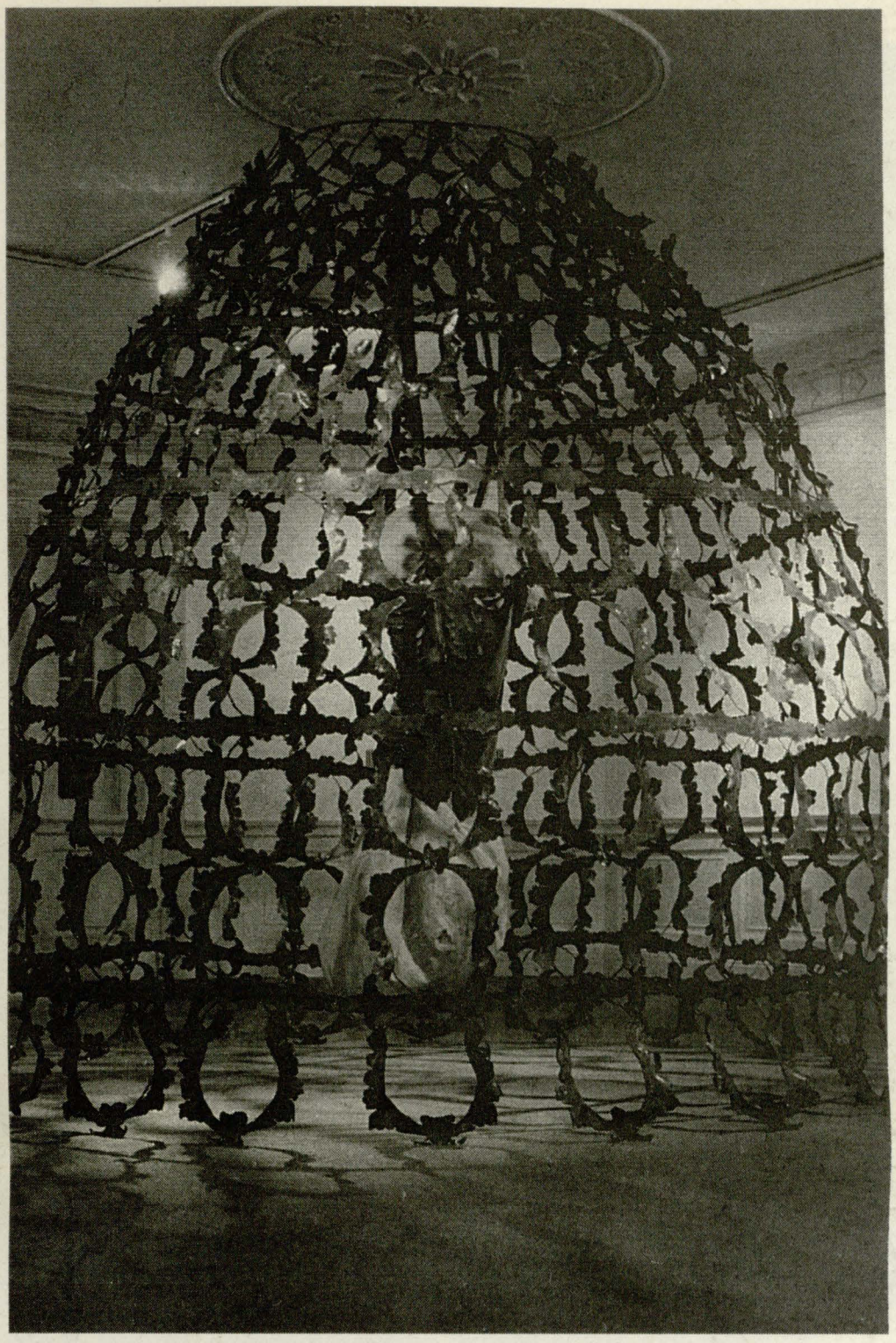
## RUSSELL BILES

*Greenville*
*Born Concord, NC, 1959*

Russell Biles has been called a "sculptural satirist." He pulls ideas from his personal experience as a parent and presents them in forms that provoke responses to larger issues in contemporary society.

These three-dimensional cartoons may initially appear innocent — after all, he has chosen blues and pinks associated with gender. But take a closer look. The children and the toys they hold up for inspection address difficult issues that influence our children's development. Issues such as overindulgence and society's expectations of gender, or lessons such as the golden rule, which we try to pass on to our children knowing such lessons do not always translate in the real world.

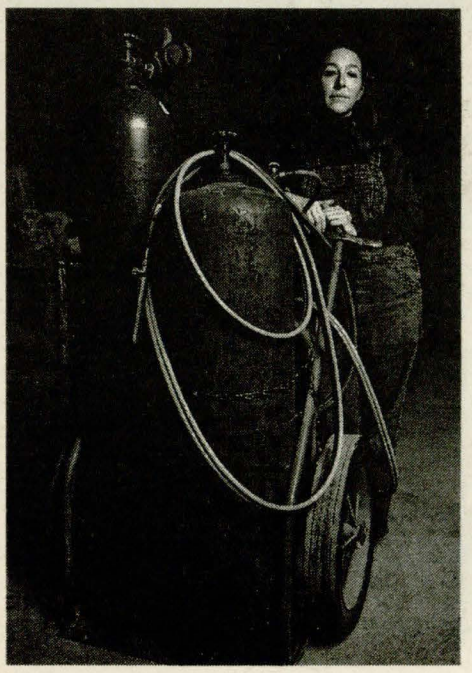
This work, known as *Daddy's Babies*, was influenced by those figurines of wide-eyed children that one finds in magazine advertisements. To Biles, the figurines' "distorted concept of children worked as an ideal metaphor for what we perceive we are teaching our children and the reality of our influences."



## ALISON COLLINS

*Charleston*
*Born New York, NY, 1966*

*Skirt Dome and Breathing Corset*, 1997, steel, cloth, latex and motor, 9' x 25' diameter



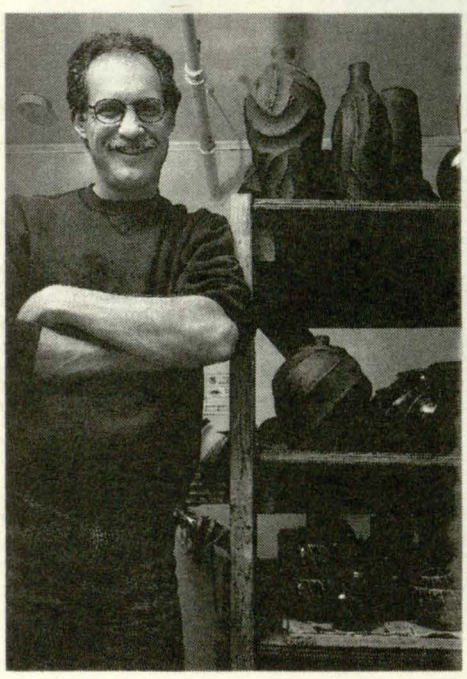
The juxtaposition of feminine garments made from the "masculine" material of steel is a fundamental element of recent installations by Alison Collins. The paradox of a garment that could never possibly be worn is made concrete in a skirt and corset of steel. This suggests the binding, constraining quality of certain clothes which have often stood as a metaphor for the constricting roles women have faced. In the past and present, fashion can serve as a barometer for the freedom or lack of freedom for women in society.

Using this traditional art material to create sculpture which literally suggests the figure of a woman, Collins is able to play on the idea of both the presence and the absence, and therefore the power and lack of power, of women in society. The material is key to understanding the artist's intentions in the work. Collins says, "The rigidity and industrial associations of steel combined with the yielding virtue of fabric cultivates visual metaphors for the discrepancy between desire and reality."

## JIM CONNELL

*Rock Hill*
*Born Woodstock, IL, 1951*

*Asymmetrical Red Sandblasted Carved Teapot*, 1997, stoneware, 14" x 12" x 8"



The search for the ultimate form drives Jim Connell's experimentation in clay. His teapots are "inspired by nature and guided by historical precedence. They are homes of space, containers of volume." They are also at once functional vessels, decorative objects and expressive forms upon which Connell has turned his imagination.

There is a whimsical quality to this work, with an allusion to Aladdin's lamp. Connell has carved and sandblasted the surface of the teapots, while allowing the glaze to remain neutral and consistent. Connell comments, "I rely on the glazes, the firing, the flame — to play with, dance with and accent each pot — giving each their own unique signature."

## DAVID DETRICH

*Clemson*
*Born East St. Louis, MO, 1957*


*May '94, XXXII, No 9 (Artforum)*, 1996, magazine, steel, glass, 12" x 12"

David Detrich's objects are centered around ideas. Their connection to the viewer lies in an appeal to the mind over an appeal to the eye. In these works, as in much conceptual work, the artist often uses text in order to examine issues of language and meaning. Meaning in language is not fixed, but varies based on viewpoint, cultural differences and intention. Detrich uses letters and words in his work to explore and exploit this fact.

Although this work is connected to concepts, and therefore the mind over the senses, the artist is interested not only in the rational — that which one usually associates with thought — but also in its flip side, the irrational. Certain aspects of a work may be carefully planned, while others may result from "accidents," elements which happened by chance, but then function intuitively as "right."

## SUSAN FILLEY

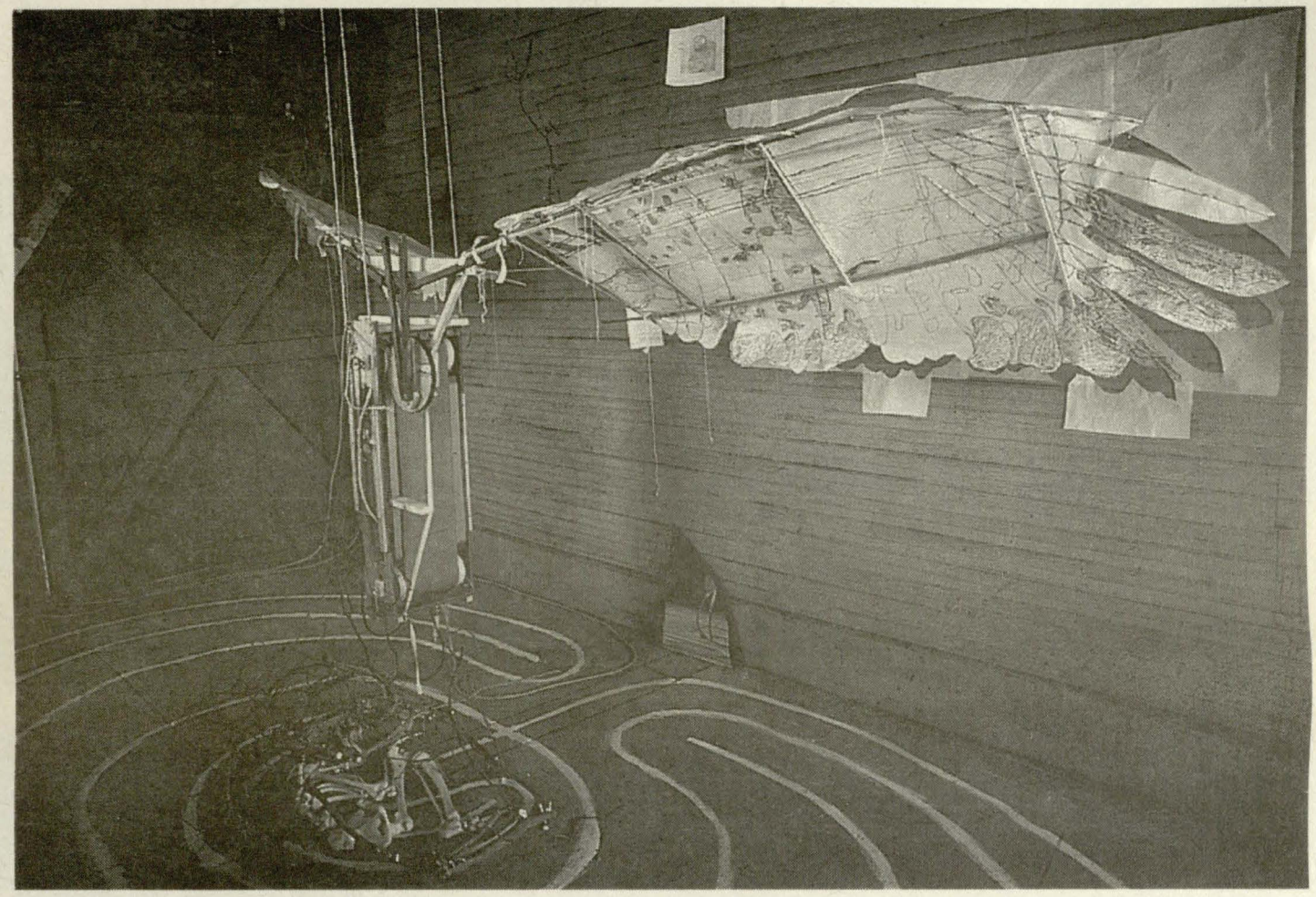
*Mount Pleasant*
*Born Chapel Hill, NC, 1957*

*Tripod Bird* from the *Dancing Teapots series*, 1997, porcelain, 11 ½" x 7" x 5"

Susan Filley focuses on functional porcelain pottery. The technical aspects of this high-fired, translucent medium allow her to experiment with pools of brilliant jewel-like color that sparkle in combination with the gloss of her black glazes.

Exploration of form has characterized her recent work. After moving to Charleston in 1995, Filley began a series she calls *Dancing Teapots*. These teapots push away from function to become sculpture, as the forms become animated and each takes on an attitude. References to birds in the work come from two sources - the abundant wildlife in the marsh around her studio, and the photographic collage of birds that covers Filley's studio walls. The work is at once playful and elegant.

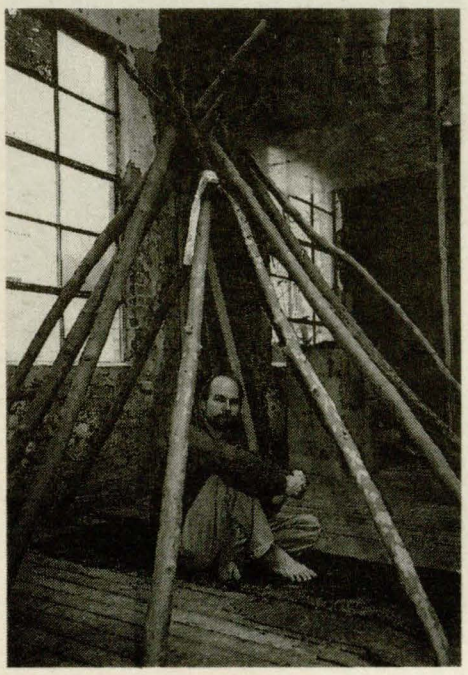
Filley writes, "I like a pot that tells its own story, that asks to be touched or tells me to treasure it, to step back, to admire it, or to serve something special. The synthesis of idea through form, function and technique is vital in all artwork...."



*The Silence*, 1994, installation sculpture, mixed media, Amtrak baggage room, Columbia

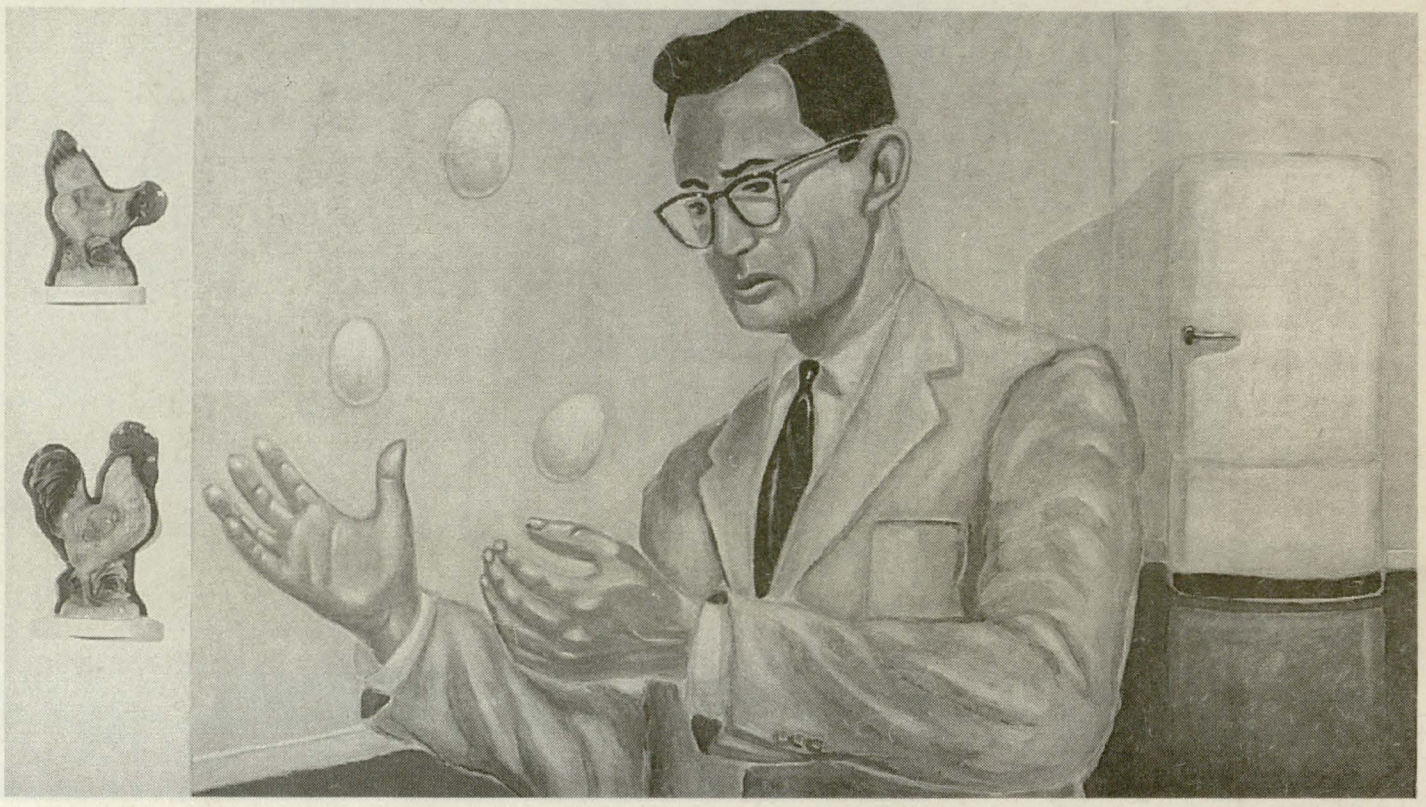
## JACK GERSTNER

*Columbia*
*Born Cheraw, SC, 1963*



Man's place in the natural world is a central theme in the work of Jack Gerstner. Using natural and found materials in ephemeral constructions, Gerstner, in essence, temporarily creates his own world. In this world he explores the connections between people, nature, technology and spirituality.

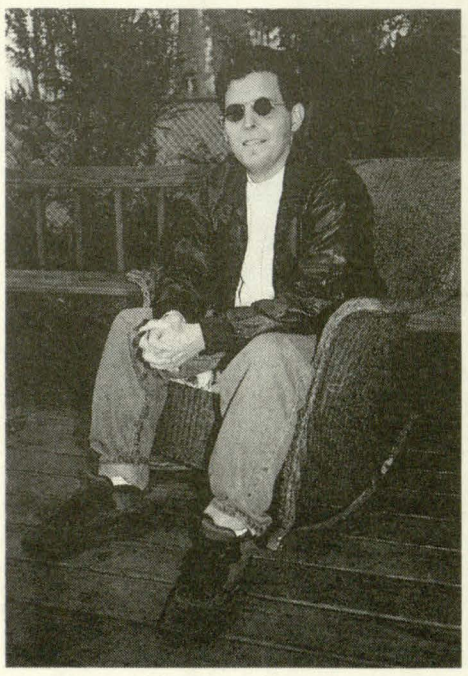
Gerstner often recombines certain universal sacred symbols, such as circular mandala-like motifs and labyrinths, with more general, yet still symbolic elements of trees, wings and ladders. The combinations found in these installations often simultaneously suggest both separation and connection, destruction and healing, decay and transcendence. As Gerstner states, "Healing transcendent imagery is a kind of visual poetry that speaks elegantly about a sense of heightened awareness." By bringing the natural world into the insulated gallery setting, Gerstner's work raises essential questions about the nature of art and about man's place in the cycle of nature.



*Egg Juggler*, August, 1997, acrylic on canvas, wood with ceramic rooster and hen, 48" x 68"

## J. SCOTT GOLDSMITH

*Greenville*
*Born Greenville, SC, 1958*



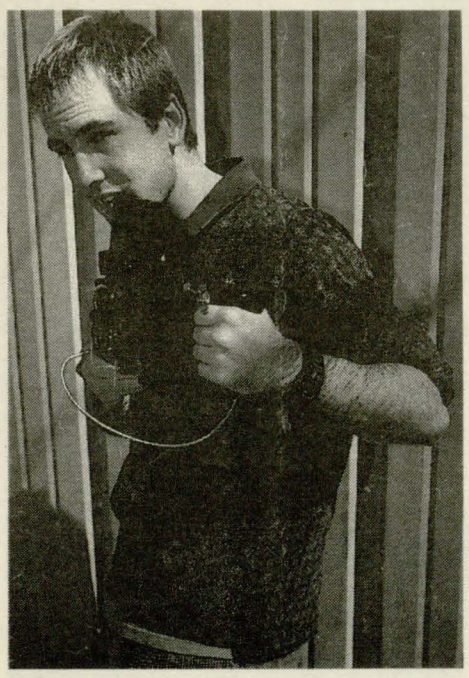
"We are giving up our traditional way of life in the South and have replaced it with the anti-traditional or so-called 'progressive society'," writes Scott Goldsmith. "We now take our cue from the mass media, ...and from Hollywood." His disillusionment with contemporary society, particularly in what he sees as a distancing from a spiritual center, is played out on his colorful canvases.

Goldsmith's work has always dealt with family relationships, but in this recent work there is more of an emphasis on the father figure. The paintings in this exhibition contain a single male engaged in a solitary activity. Although at first glance these large paintings may appear to be light-hearted and humorous, there is underlying each a sense of futility and an even greater sense of nostalgia. Goldsmith's still-life objects — knick-knacks found at flea markets and thrift shops — call to mind the family lifestyle of the 1950s, which he has idealized.

*Mr. Fowler*, 1997, toned silver print, 10" x 10"

## STEVEN HOGUE

*Columbia*
*Born Dayton, OH, 1971*



Photographs as portraits traditionally imitate likeness or capture revealing personal moments. Acknowledging the existence of this paradigm, Steven Hogue attempts to stretch the parameters. "I decided to use my subjects as actors within a space, with myself as the director. I have not captured a 'slice of life,' but have carefully orchestrated a scene, striving to create a strong sense of narrative story in each image."

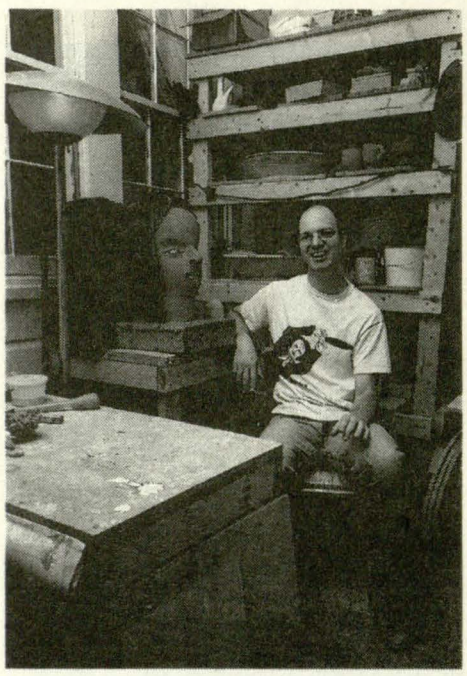
The subjects in Hogue's photographs defy the traditional. The artist masks his characters, covering their eyes or heads in an effort to divert attention away from the person to the situation. The obscurities range from bicycle helmets to trash baskets. The settings add even more vagueness - blank walls and closed doors. Hogue draws the viewer into a world of unknowns, often by manipulating odd angles.

As the "director," Hogue's hope is that the resulting images reflect his sense of humor and love of fantastic stories and characters. Hogue's strength lies in his acknowledgment of the power of a still photograph to communicate.

## DAVID HOOKER

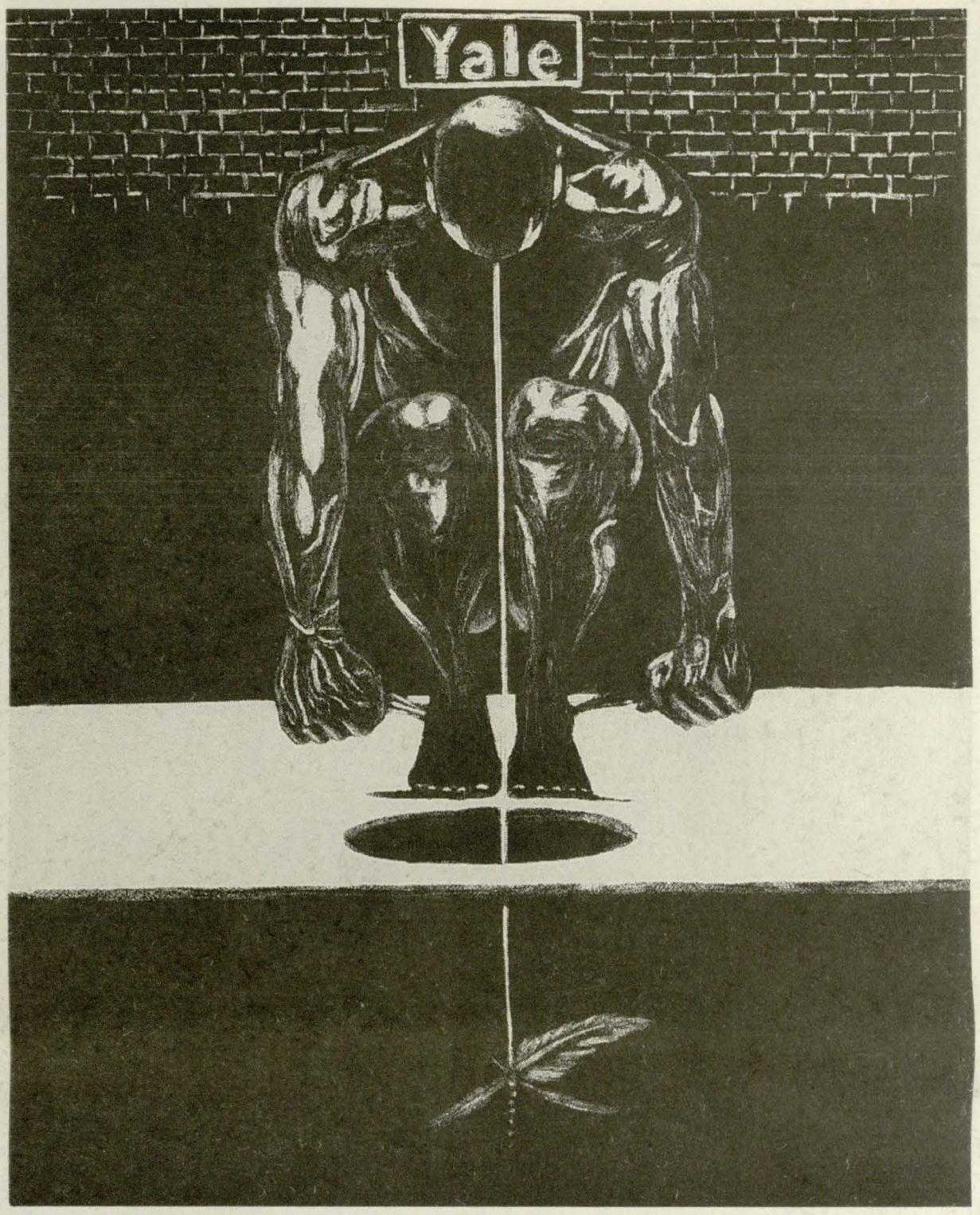
*Spartanburg*
*Born Greensboro, NC, 1968*

*Teapot: Musing on Farming*, 1997, ceramic, 16" x 6" x 24"



David Hooker's influences are varied and this is apparent in works which seem to embody both eccentric energy and meditative calm at the same time. One of Hooker's influences, that of 19th century Carolina pottery, especially the face jugs specific to our region, suggest a connection to the traditions of Hooker's own southern upbringing. This is also seen in the religious references, where the off-center quality of much of Hooker's work seems particularly tuned in to the passionate and often idiosyncratic nature of religion in the south.

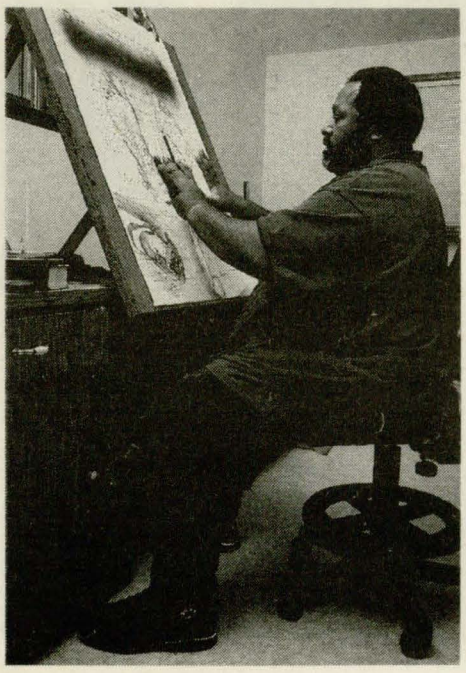
Figurative elements are omnipresent in Hooker's work. The little bald-headed figures' eyes are wide and unblinking, yet their mouths are open, with double rows of frenetic, little white teeth. The figures seem to be on the verge of speaking, yet at the same time arrested in the moment, held in check by the nature of the material which contains them. Functional elements are also often incorporated into the work, focusing attention back on the materials themselves. Hooker states, "My work reflects my search for honesty: in my materials , my process, and my vision."




*Bootstraps?!II*, 1996, etching, 16" x 20"

## TERRY K. HUNTER

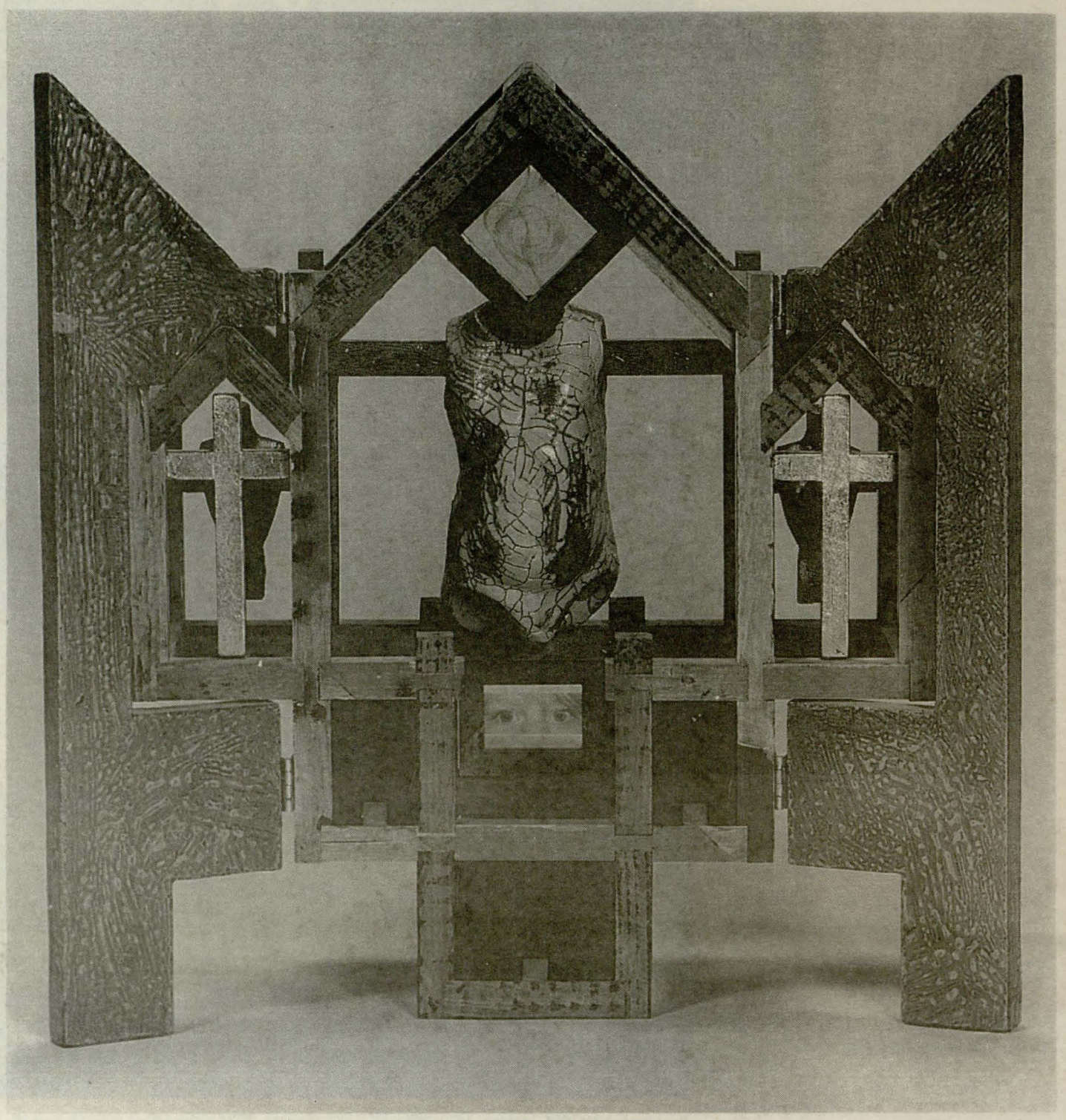
*Orangeburg*
*Born Tallahassee, FL, 1951*



Innovation within tradition is important to Terry K. Hunter. As a teacher of drawing and printmaking at South Carolina State University, it is his mission to provide a traditional academic framework that serves as a springboard from which his students can find their own voices. It is the same in his own work, for one will find in it a grid that is the foundation from which Hunter's symbolic imagery speaks. Sometimes that voice shouts, other times it whispers, but it always speaks with authority a message of value and meaning.

His grid motif is a way of organizing and controlling space. Upon this grid Hunter works with layers, both in his process and in his meaning. He says, "I superimpose and combine several images that simultaneously exist on different planes and levels that in some instances create visual contradictions." These layers ask us to reconsider our perception of reality. What is true collage and what is drawn to simulate torn paper? What does he include as visual pun and what should be interpreted literally?

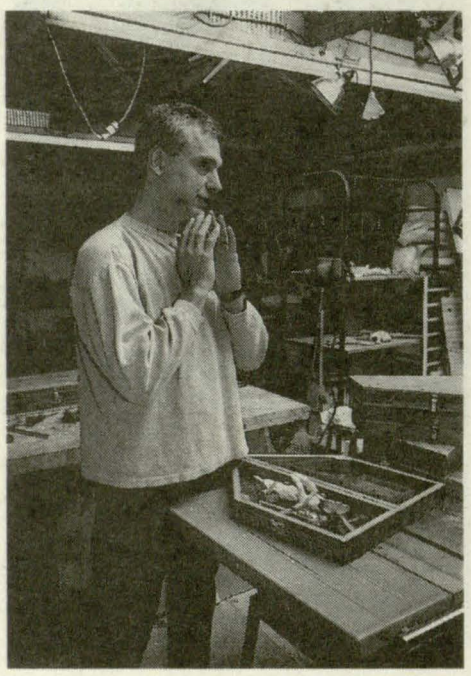
Hunter's vocabulary of symbol is rich and evocative. Some are personal, some universal. Some speak directly to an African-American point of view, others are ambiguous. He has said he does not literally recreate "things" in his drawings, but he represents ideas through symbols that convey the message. This is, for Hunter, the reality of art.



## PETER LENZO

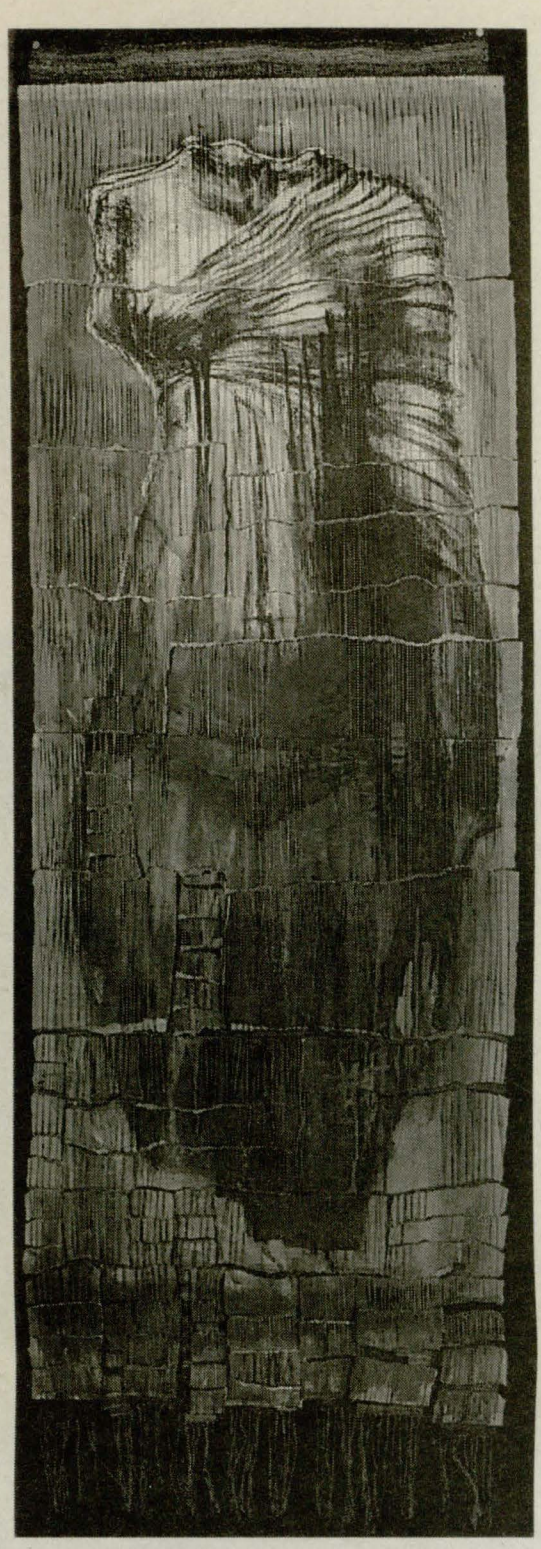
*Columbia*
*Born New York, NY, 1955*

*Roxanne*, 1997, mixed media, 15" x 6 ½" x 17 ½"



Visually complex and beautiful, Peter Lenzo's altar constructions borrow from objects of both personal and religious significance. "These altars and reliquaries reflect the influence of both the simple passion of household shrines and the ostentatious reverence of traditional Catholic altars," he writes. They are personal statements that connect with larger issues within our contemporary society. In the specific work constructed for this exhibition, Lenzo places porcelain slip casts of guns in a position equal to figurines depicting the Virgin Mary, calling attention to the elevated position our society assigns to firearms.

Lenzo is at heart a collector — shelves in his studio are lined with reliquaries he is saving for just the right use. In the three pieces exhibited in the satellite show at NationsBank Plaza, Lenzo has incorporated objects of very personal significance — locks of hair, slip casts of children's toys, photographic transparencies. These are shrines to his three children.



## KIT LONEY

*Folly Beach*
*Born Houston, TX, 1955*

*Fragmented Quartzite Torso*, 1996, gouache and charcoal on paper, rayon, silk, wool, cotton, 70" x 23"

Weaving fragments of images to evoke fragments of memory is central to the work of Kit Loney. Hers is a blending of the academic discipline of drawing from classical models and the traditional craft of weaving. Tacked to the walls of her studio are small sketches and larger charcoal drawings done on heavy drawing paper. Loney is intrigued by these Classical Greek and Egyptian figures from antiquity, many only fragments themselves. She writes, "these fragments still evoke the sensitivity and depth of human identity."

Loney furthers the fragmentation by tearing apart the paper, shattering the illusion of the figure as represented in the sketch. Each torn strip becomes a layer in her tapestry as the form is loosely recreated in the weaving. Yet the reconstruction is only partial, as she states, "the evidence of their fragmentation and resurrection becomes a characteristic of their new identity."

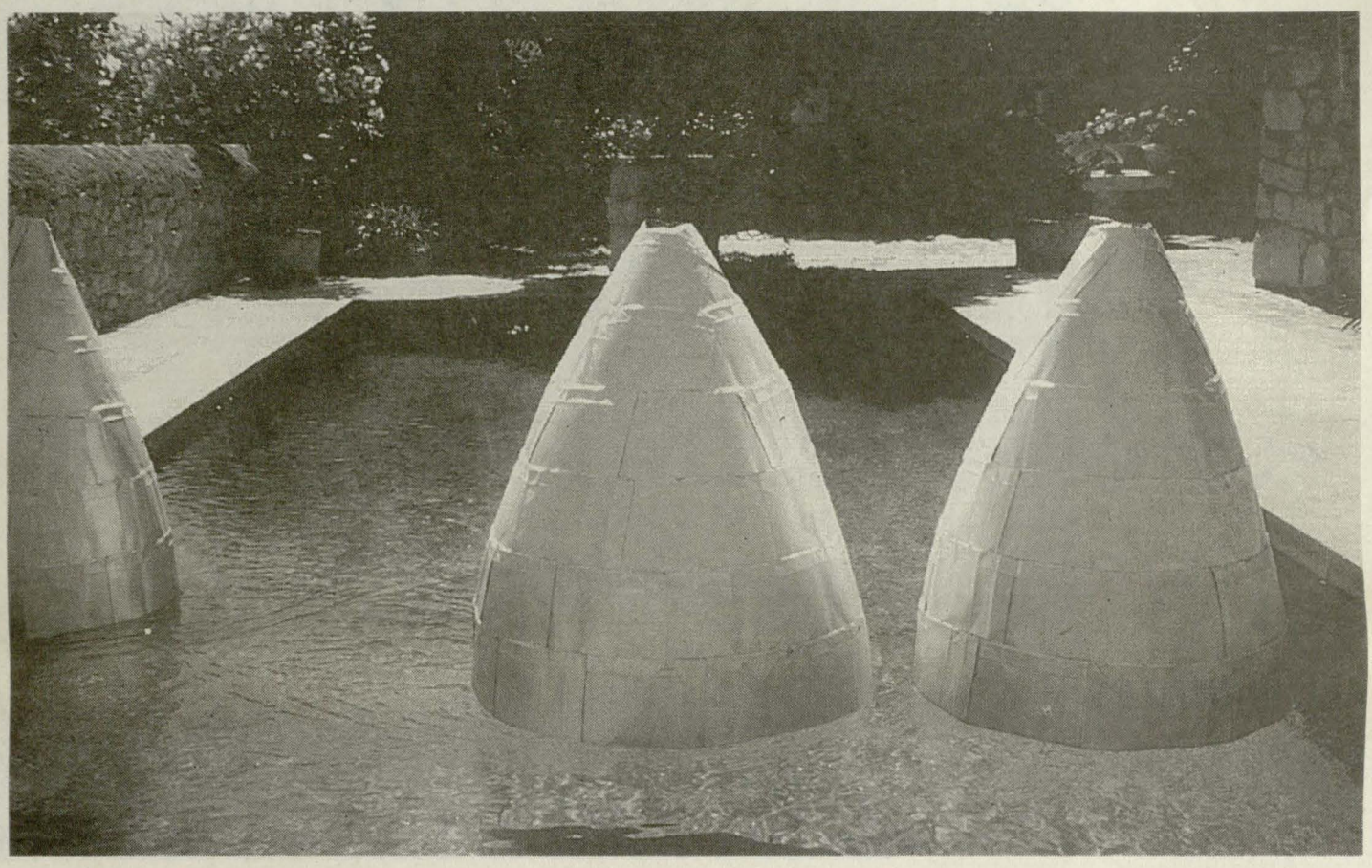

*The Manual World*, 1997, hand embroidery on pieced fabrics, 8 ½" x 5 ¼"

## LEE MALERICH

*Orangeburg*
*Born Decatur, IL, 1951*

Lee Malerich's work is a narrative of personal experiences. She has always used her embroidery to process and express her responses to issues both unique and universal. Hers is a rich, evocative vocabulary of forms and symbols with a decidedly feminist slant. In much of the work there is a figure that represents Malerich herself. At times an observer and at others a protagonist, this figure provides an entry into the work, allowing the viewer a glimpse of the artist's inner thoughts.

The body of work represented in this exhibition is a response to Malerich's recent experiences with cancer. Having always approached her work with an enviable discipline and passion, Malerich's work allows her a release during this challenging time she refers to as her "cancer chapter." She writes in her introduction to a recent show of her work at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, "Creating something throws oneself into the future; it projects and visualizes a future…My belief in the power of creating is my strongest one." In this work Malerich includes references to others who are dealing with the disease, "a cast of characters who are traveling with me on my journey, as well as conducting their own…as I create for myself, I also create futures for them in this personal world of mine."



## LARRY MERRIMAN

*Hartsville*
*Born Middletown, OH, 1946*

*Conquistador*, 1997, installation: cardboard milk cartons, hot glue, Truillo, Spain

"Important is my use of cardboard as a primary material: cardboard becomes form, subject matter and content. Cardboard containers hold everything from food and medicine to appliances and televisions. It protects, it sustains the damage, and once emptied, loses its function. Our thoughts about it are practical, subliminal or nonexistent unless a new use suggests reconsideration. I intend that a contrast should exist between my traditional approach to sculpture and my use of an innocuous material like cardboard," writes Larry Merriman in his proposal for a site-specific construction for the TRIENNIAL satellite exhibition at NationsBank Plaza.

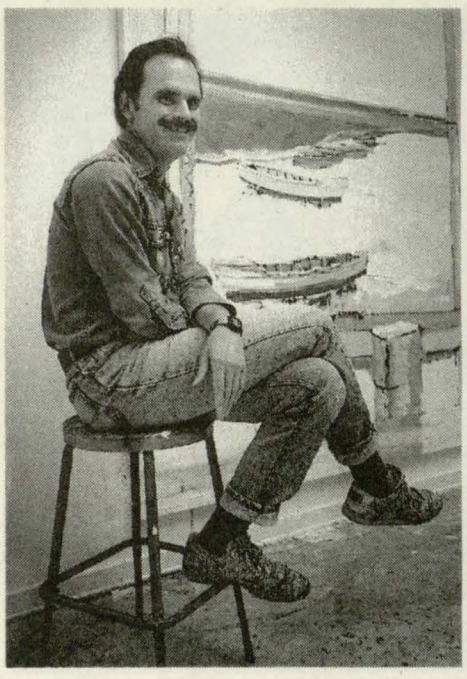
It is the contrast of his material against the opulent environment of this specific space that is most immediate. Merriman's scultpure suggests reconsideration. He has used what we consider trash, the cast off packaging of consumerism, to create a work that is elegant in form, a work based on mathematical perfection.

He has also caused us to consider what may be the results if our society continues on this path of rampant consumption.

## PHILIP MULLEN

*Columbia*
*Born Akron, OH, 1942*

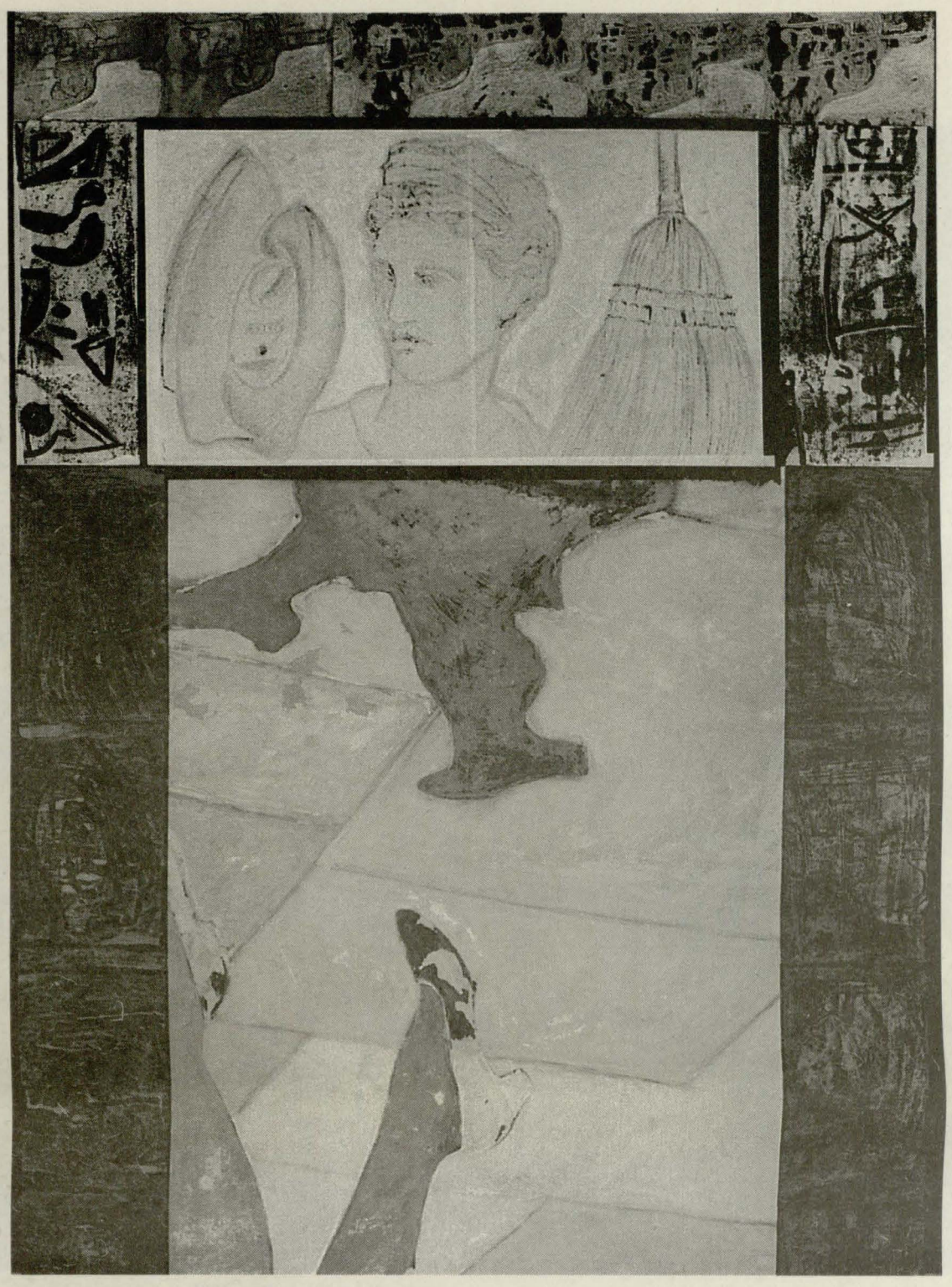
*20 Boxes*, November 1996, acrylic on canvas, 72" x 52"



In the catalogue for a 1996 retrospective of Philip Mullen's, McKissick Museum curator Jay Williams writes, "Mullen's history as an artist, so clearly revealed in this exhibition, centers on process, change and portrayal of feeling - his long-term goal." For more than 35 years that goal has served well this established artist.

Mullen began his career as an abstract expressionist but was focused on figurative drawing when he moved to Columbia in the late 1960s. The '70s found him engrossed in large-scale grid-pattern paintings while in the '80s he explored landscape.

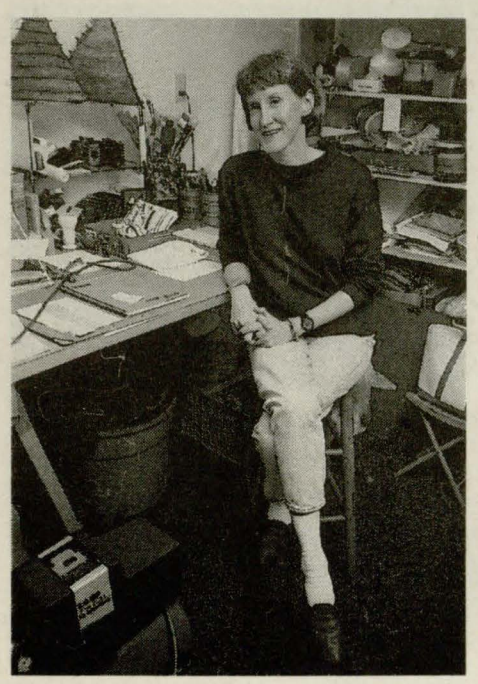
Mullen's recent work is a synthesis of earlier interests. These still-life paintings, illustrating a shift toward representation, were inspired by recent trips to South Korea, where new experiences drew his attention and informed his choice of subject. Williams writes, "The traditional market in Seoul was an overwhelming experience for him: incredibly intense smells, colors and sounds reminded Mullen that in the second half of life there are new discoveries to be made." These paintings are intimate details, insightful in their focus, in which Mullen's use of space gives form to feeling.



*distressed image II*, 1997, mixed media drawing on panel, 62" x 44"

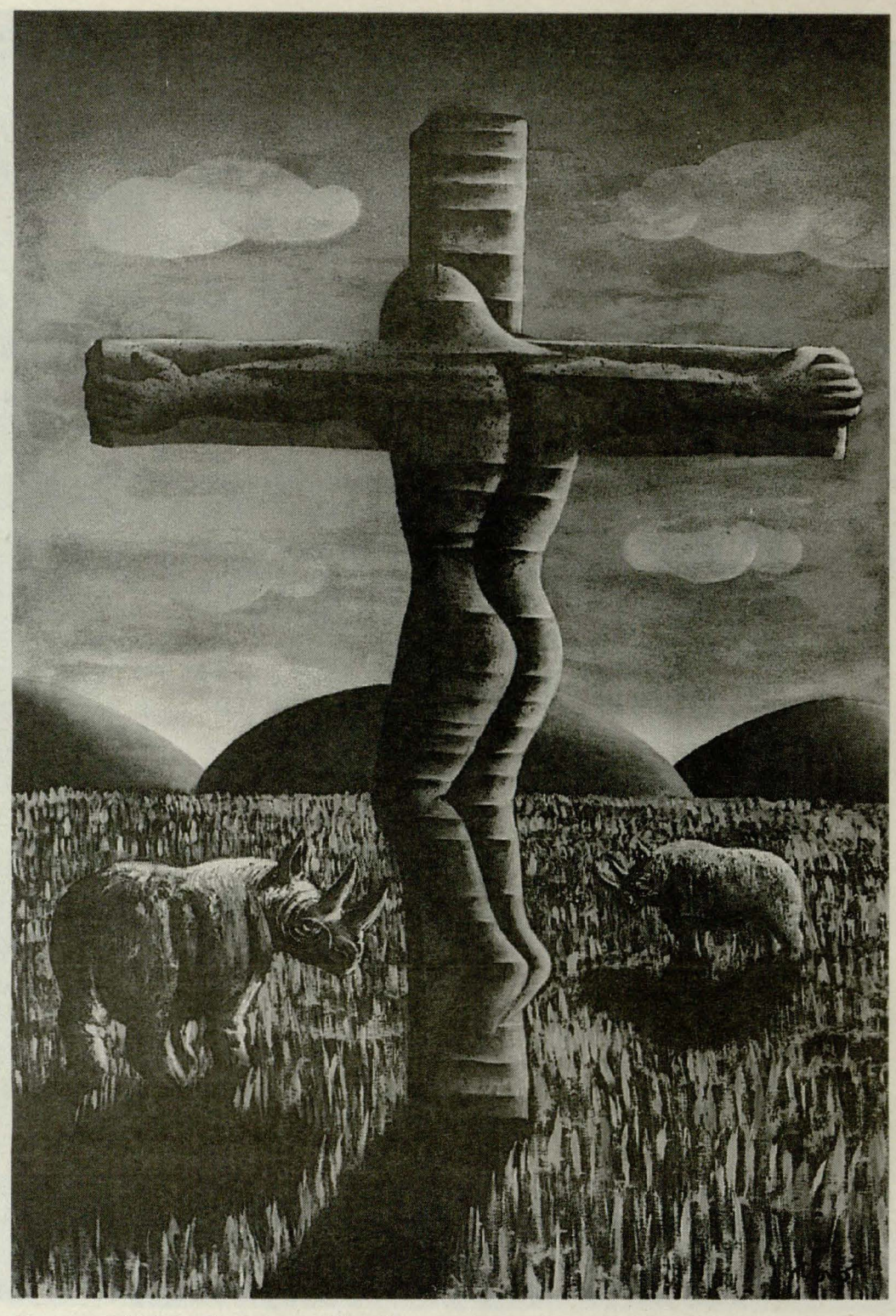
## JANE ALLEN NODINE

*Spartanburg*
*Born Spartanburg, SC, 1954*



Jane Nodine's recent work is enigmatic and veiled in mystery. She uses the computer with a feminist slant, creating manipulated photographs of objects of popular culture. She writes, "The ambiguous nature of the narrative and cryptic elements in the work - photo-based images and drawings - act like a key to serve viewers on a personal and individual basis. The pieces of the puzzle appear clear to some, while others will carry the images like coins in a change purse, hidden safely away."

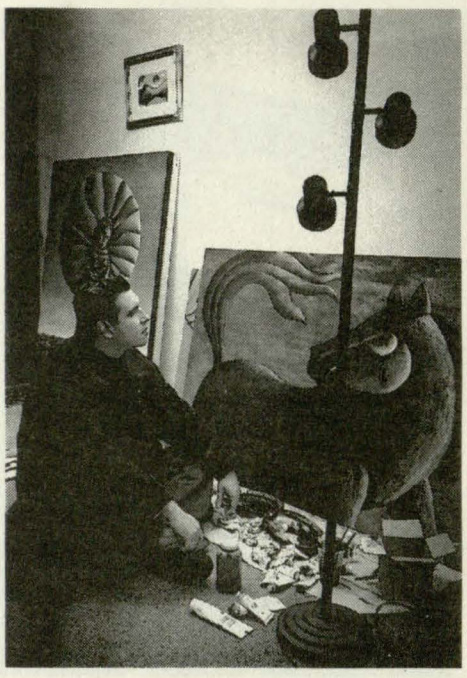
Many of her works carry symbols of domestic life and of violence. It is intriguing when Nodine juxtaposes the face of an iron with images of a gun. These layered works provide contrast and tension while exploring the issue of power as it relates to gender.



## MARCELO NOVO

*Columbia*
*Born Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1963*

*Monument I*, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 58" x 40"



Spontaneous construction - work from the subconscious - quick and intuitive - all describe the work of Marcelo Novo. His paintings just happen.

Known as "automatism," a term coined by the early surrealist artist André Breton, this method of expression gives the artist unlimited creative freedom by allowing images to flow freely from the subconscious to the canvas. Reason is suppressed in favor of spontaneity. Novo does not begin with preconceived ideas, he paints directly onto the canvas without preliminary sketches. This process allows, and to some extent requires, Novo to work quickly, so that his paintings are completed in one session. It would be against his intention to give additional thought to the images or subjects, or even to consider for very long the reason certain forms appear. If he did, they would come from a conscious level.

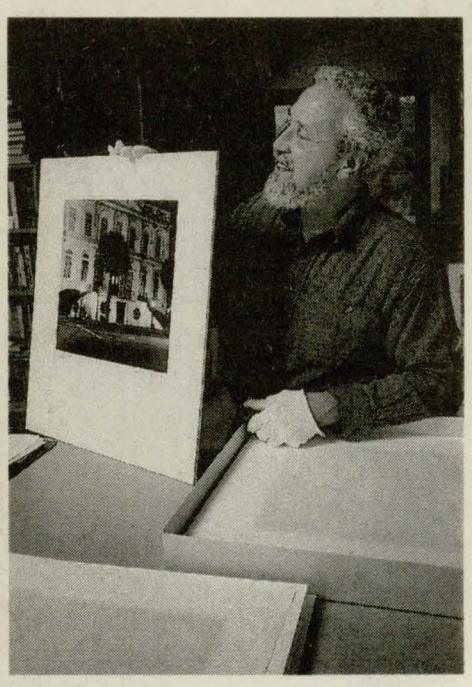
Yet Novo does acknowledge that recurrent symbols appear in his work "as manifestations of my own 'recorded' experiences ... certain images are closely related to the Latin American culture as a whole, and they have been transferred to me through my cultural heritage." And Novo does work in a serial fashion, so that subconsciously, a relationship develops on a symbolic level from one work to the next.

The three pieces chosen for this exhibition represent Novo's return to color after working exclusively in black and white for his last several series. These paintings are an exploration of themes, however unconscious the artist may have been in creating them, that express an organic response to birth, with strong Judeo-Christian overtones.

## JORGE OTERO

*Camden*
*Born Havana, Cuba, 1943*

*The Old Guardhouse*, 1996, c-print, 13" x 13"



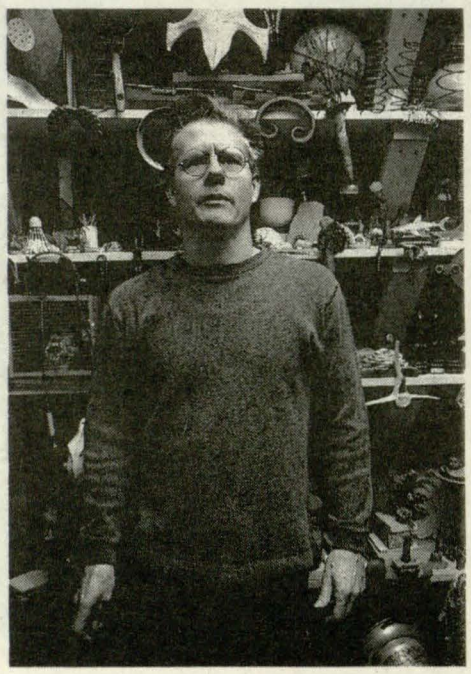
Capturing a different angle of the picturesque city was Jorge Otero's intention in this body of work he has titled *Tenebrae: Charleston, Nocturnal Cityscapes*. Although well-documented by day, the city had not been explored photographically in her evening attire. A different atmosphere emerged, as familiar sites took on a mystery and drama intensified by the theatricality of the combination of light sources.

Another aspect developed as Otero moved from ordinary daylight to work in the darkness. He began to consider the predatory nature of the photographer and his own vulnerability. He writes, "Always looking for prey to catch and fix on film, the photographer is aware that at times, the hunter becomes the hunted. There is danger in the city at night....The mind is sharpened to a heightened state of awareness. One finds oneself looking around, paying as much attention to the surroundings as to the scene being photographed." The excitement of these experiences, and the recognition that few photographers are pursuing in-depth nocturnal studies, has led Otero to turn his highly developed technical prowess to exploring the night light of other communities.

## HERB PARKER

*Charleston*
*Born Elizabeth City, NC, 1953*

*Relationship #3*, 1995, wood, cast iron, steel, resin, glass, plastic, foam, bronze, 25" x 16" x 12"



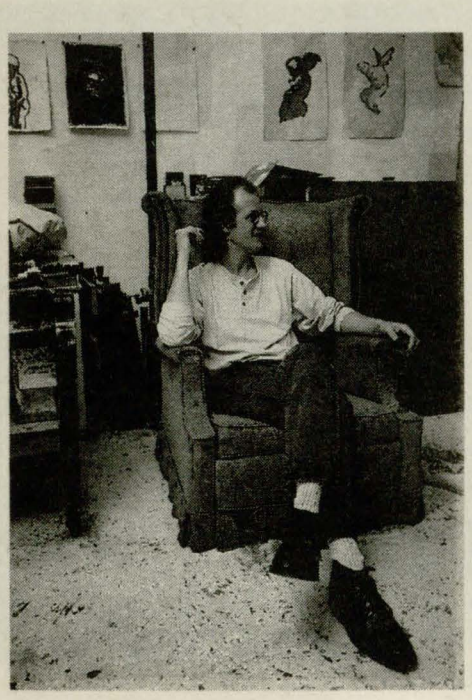
Created by the artist alone in his studio, these creatures are manifestations of Parker's ruminations on issues connected to relationships. The objects are disturbingly humorous, like impish demons who have just crawled out from under the bed, hoping for an audience. This psychological tension gives one the feeling that these works are characters from private dreams, where parts are mixed together as the brain attempts to make sense of disparate and conflicting information. Created from a variety of materials, these figures are part of an ongoing body of work in which Parker explores ideas about male/female interactions. The distorted elements of the figures suggests the complex and often antagonistic nature of human relationships.

The creation of these pieces has allowed the artist a mechanism for dealing with the rather dramatic changes that occur in one's life as relationships shift and change. Parker has recently become a father and this life change is reflected in the work. As Parker states, "This work more accurately reflects who I am than anything else I do." Even though these works are almost personal fetish objects for the artist, the ideas and emotions evoked through the prominent, all-seeing pregnant, fertility figure and the screaming, disembodied head of a man are universal and familiar. In attempting to sort out his response to marriage and fatherhood, Parker may be tapping into a collective, perhaps unconscious, ambivalence about interdependence and relationships.

*Bed*, 1996, oil on canvas, 74½" x 71"

## CLIFFTON PEACOCK

*Charleston*
*Born Chicago, IL, 1953*

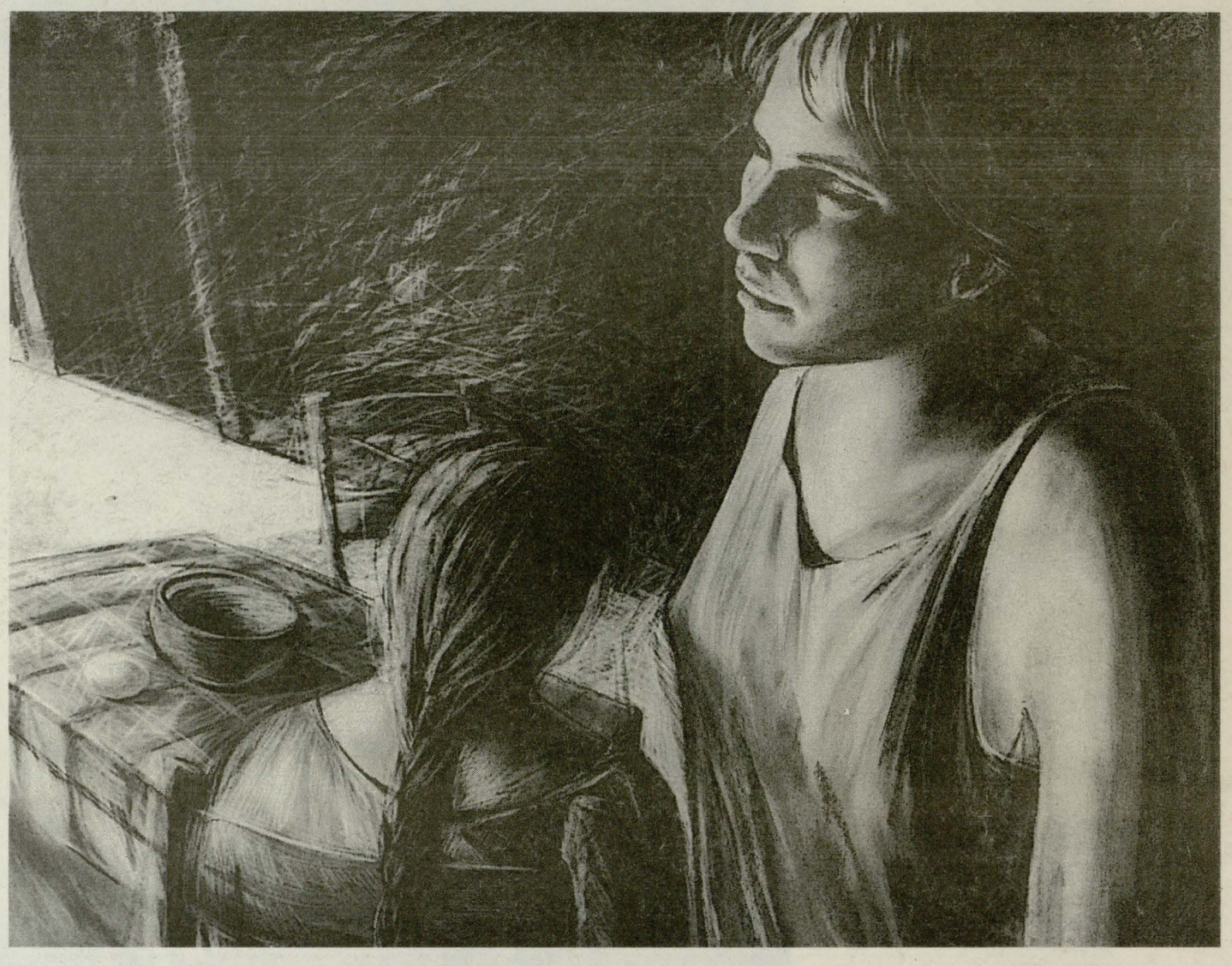


Cliffton Peacock's painting is about the tradition of painting. To be even more specific his work is about painting the figure.

He writes:

"I don't consider the history of western painting to be a moribund tradition incapable of addressing contemporary concerns. I feel exactly the opposite and my painting attempts to extend this tradition by use of the figure. My work is not an homage to artists I admire. It has no political agenda or value as social commentary. It is not a rebuke of any contemporary artistic strategy. It is neither sentimental nor idealized. My painting is about what might still be possible within the confines of an older tradition that up and died suddenly, sometime in the sixties."

Interspersed among the large canvases tacked to the walls of his studio are small charcoal sketches of body parts which are the inspiration for Peacock's studies of the figure. These symbolically reference his traditional academic training, providing a starting point for his poetic explorations in paint.



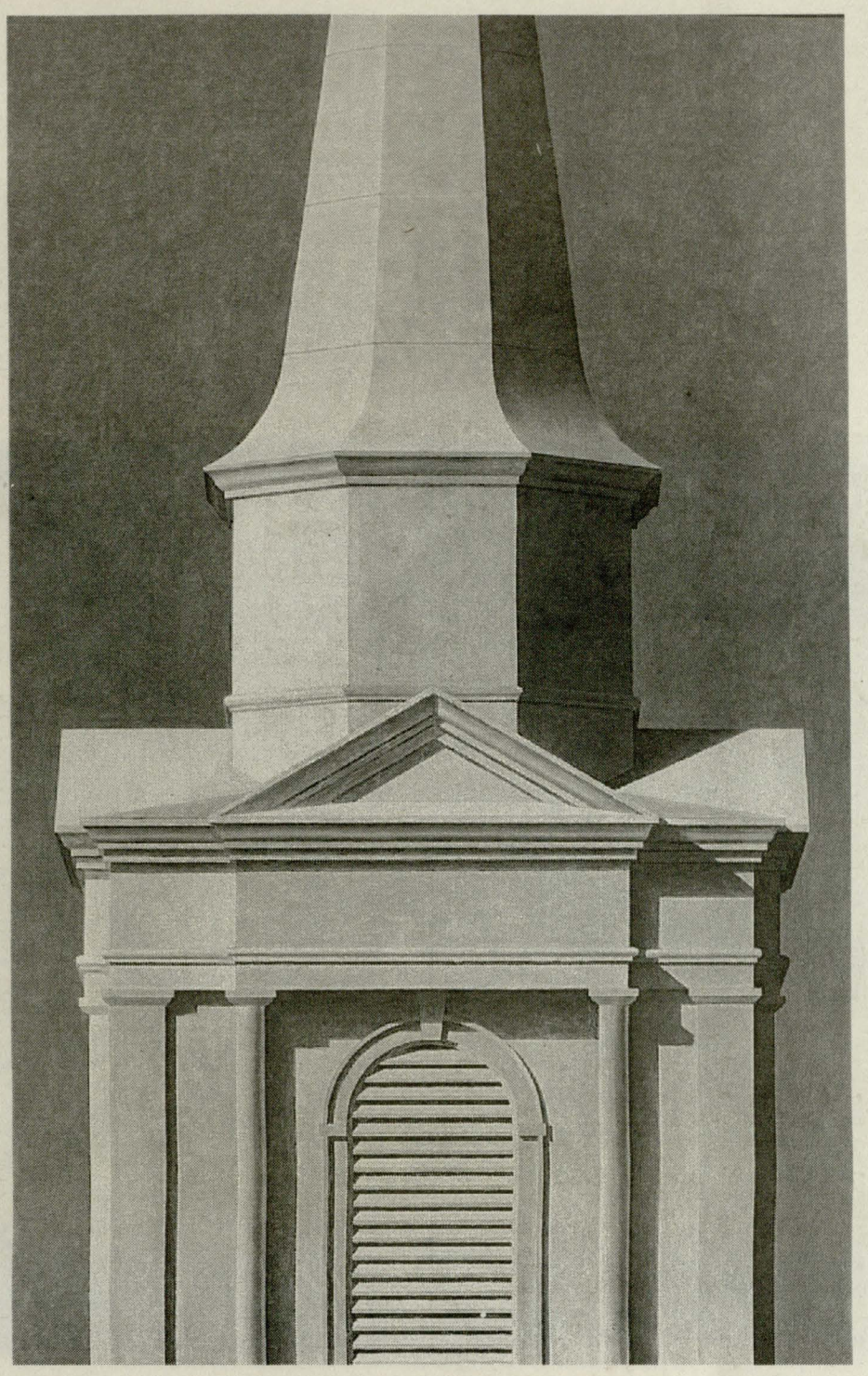
*Silent Conversation*, 1997, charcoal on matboard, 32" x 40"

## TERESA PRATER

*Spartanburg*
*Born Knoxville, TN, 1957*

"It is the distinct, expressive manner of mark making, high contrast of lights and darks, and the dramatic sense of mystery created by the charcoal medium that fascinates me the most," writes Teresa Prater. She might also speak of the mastery of the medium, for in her work there is a complete synthesis of process and content. Her choice of charcoal allows Prater to draw intuitively, to apply marks to the surface as ideas form in her mind. She doesn't work from preliminary sketches. But it is the expressive qualities of the medium — the bold chiaroscuro, the dramatic handling of light and shadow — that Prater uses to its ultimate advantage. In her work light becomes an element of high drama, giving emotional intensity to the narrative.

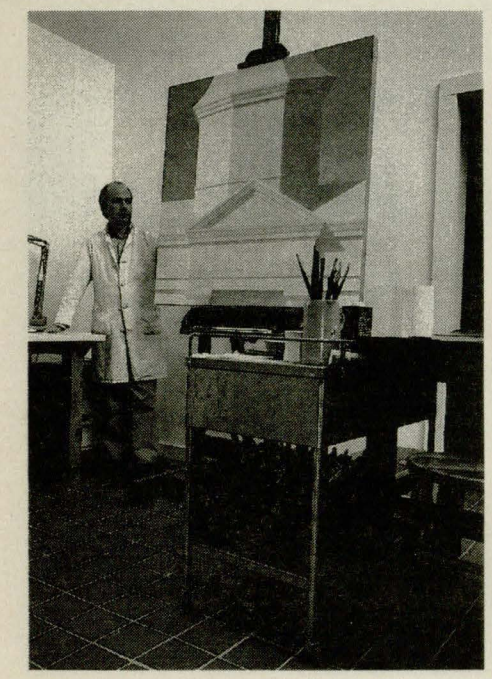
Prater's drawings are explorations of relationships. Portrayed are the conflicts, the struggles and the dynamics of human interaction. Much of Prater's recent work focuses on the intimate stories of close friends and family. Of particular interest has been her relationship with her daughter. In this new work, where there are two dominant figures, there are also strong symbolic references to motherhood.



## EDWARD RICE

*North Augusta*
*Born North Augusta, SC, 1953*

*Presbyterian*, 1998, oil on canvas, 48" x 30"



Ed Rice writes, "I have been interested in classically inspired architecture since I was a child. I walked by such a church each day on my way home from grade school." It is this building that Rice has painted in *Presbyterian* and *Presbyterian II*.

"I chose to depict this particular building, not because I admire it, (there are certainly more distinguished spires around) but because I find its particular architectural realization thought provoking." He hopes to initiate questions of the viewer that relate to perspective, to point of view, to time and place. He wants the viewer to wonder what is real, to question if the spire is based on an architectural model or on the real object. Nothing in Rice's approach is unplanned. All he does is done with a piercing inquiry and attention to detail bordering on the obsessive.

This attention to detail is nowhere more evident than in his choice of paint. Rice studies light, the warmth or coolness, the time of day, the shadows cast. His selection of paint body and value is dependent on the specific light he hopes to replicate or manipulate.

In these paintings Rice has structured our point of reference and has engaged us in his explorations while challenging us to find the unique in the familiar.

## MARY ELLEN RICE

*Columbia*
*Born Columbus, OH, 1974*

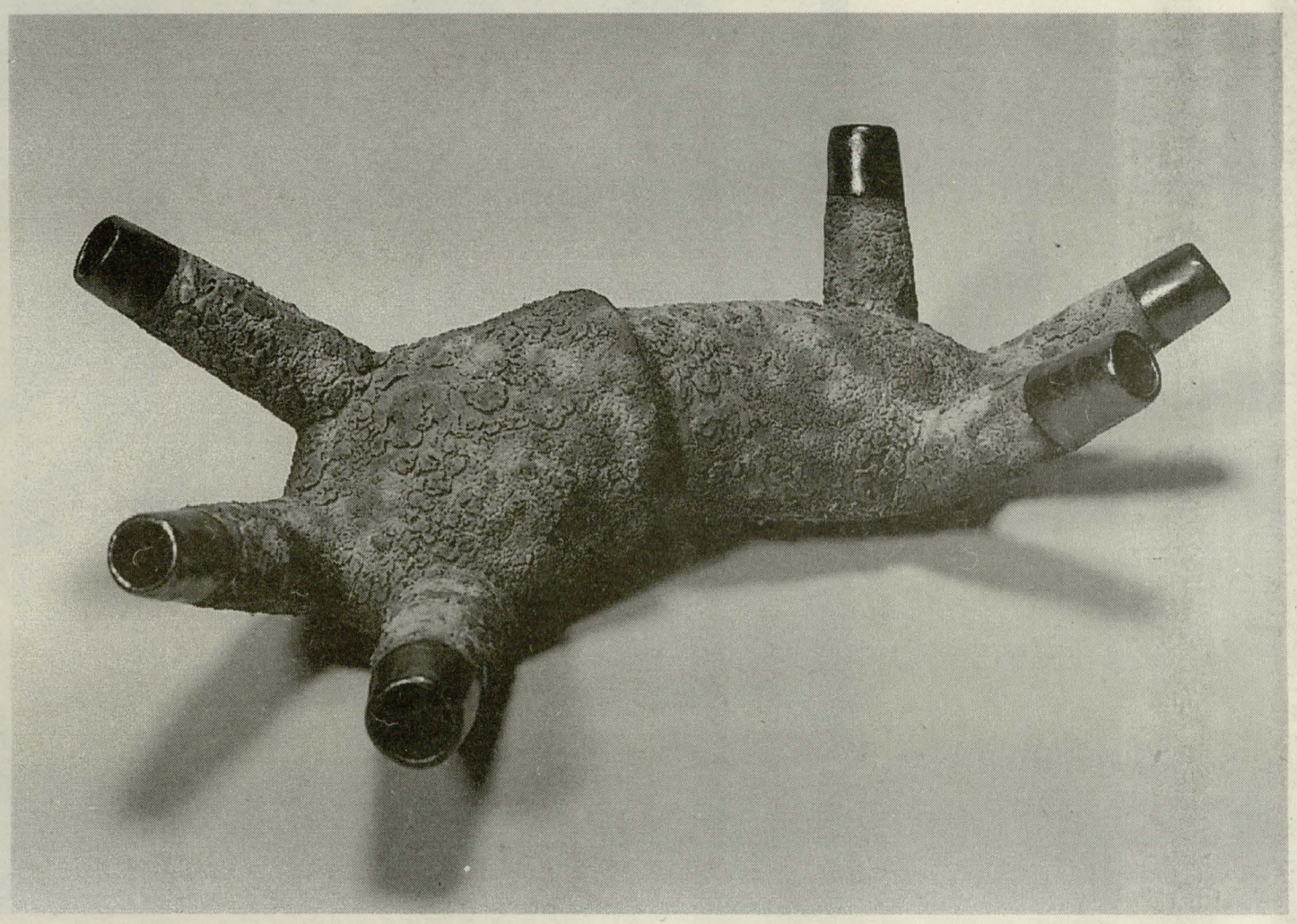
*Witness*, 1997, gelatin silver print, 8 ½" x 12 ½"

Environment and human reaction to it is the subject of the photography of Mary Ellen Rice. The artist places people in a variety of settings ranging from the familiar, home or work, to the unknown, a place they have never been or an environment created by Rice. Her goal is "to capture a person's thoughts, emotions, or maybe a moment of time that best expresses their reaction to these environments."

Rice does not categorize her work. She allows it to evolve. "The work may be traditional in one sense, but it may escalate into an abstraction or a sculptural form. Whatever the case may be, my goal is for the viewer to feel the emotions captured, and be left to make some conclusions."

## VIRGINIA SCOTCHIE

*Columbia*
*Born Portsmith, VA, 1955*



*Turquoise Funnels*, 1998, clay and glaze, 7" x 21" x 10"

A gardening tool, a pipe, a kitchen funnel — all everyday objects whose form would usually be taken for granted. Not so in the recent work by Virginia Scotchie. Scotchie finds the object, no matter how humble, holds a fascination worth exploring. She writes, "With this new body of work I have continued my ongoing investigation of man-made and natural objects. Usually these consist of small things; ordinary in many ways, but possessing an odd quirkiness that pulls me to them."

Scotchie's sculptures in clay also pull at the viewer. They call for investigation of their form and texture. Each a unique study based on one of her ordinary objects, these pieces are for Scotchie like a blank page in a child's coloring book, providing a surface upon which to color outside the lines. Here she experiments, mixing crusty, corroded surfaces with the cool gloss of a metallic glaze. Through her work, Scotchie entices the viewer "to look closely and find beauty and intrigue in the humble, ordinary and familiar objects that surround us."

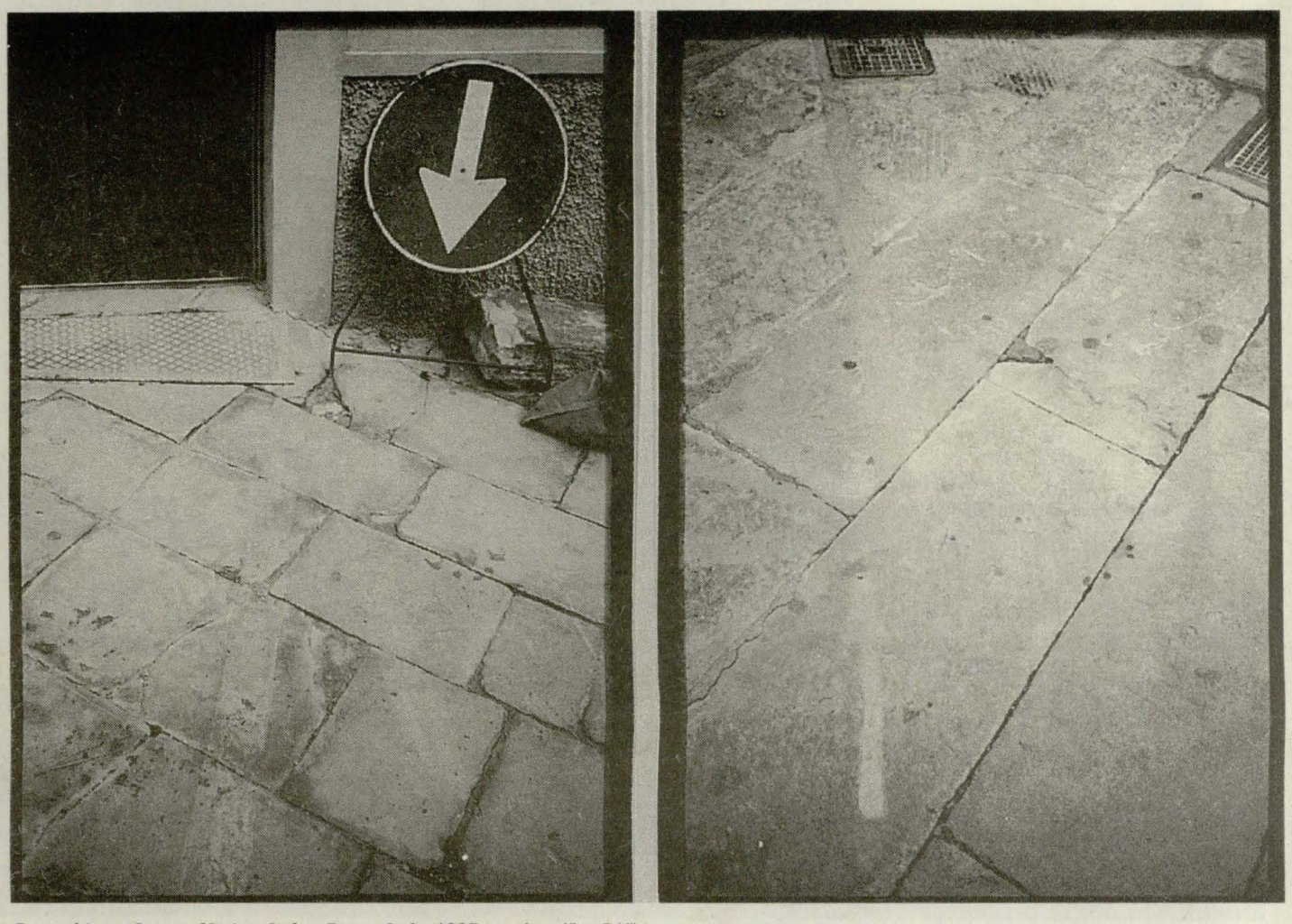

## SUSANNAH SIGALOFF

*Simpsonville*
*Born Kiev, Ukraine, 1971*

*Jezebel*, 1996, acrylic on canvas, 42" x 30"


In the midst of a search for "a more deliberate and conscious existence," Susannah Sigaloff, encountered an assembly of "misunderstood women" inhabiting the recesses of her mind. In an effort to give these women voice to dispel the dark myths that have surrounded their lives, Sigaloff opened her canvas to them. Through the artist's powerful brush strokes and explosive color, these women return to life to tell their own stories — Jezebel, priestess of Ishtar — Bonnie Parker, thrill seeker/poet — Nancy Spungeon, drug addict/rock star's lover — Edie Sedgewick, Warhol's victim/muse. About her subjects Sigaloff writes, "I wanted to examine what feeds their dark glory. An unhinging of acceptable morality. A taint of perversion, madness, a turning of an 'acceptable' role into a destructive existence. But also the self-conscious knowledge of their often needlessly dramatic lives."

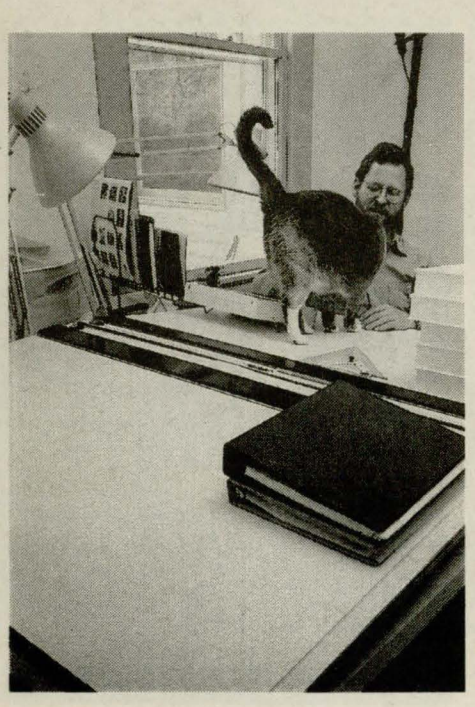
With this series, entitled *The Glamour of the Dark Myth: A Short Dictionary of Misunderstood Women*, Sigaloff brings into question the "truths" offered in mainstream history by empowering these women with voice. She depicts them as strong, but does not diminish their femininity in the process. She allows them to acknowledge their faults without destroying their character. Sigaloff offers us woman as heroine and human.



*Recombinant Image: Venice, Italy - Rome, Italy*, 1997, c-print, 4" x 5 ½"

## ROBERT SILANCE

*Pendleton*
*Born Summit, NJ, 1951*



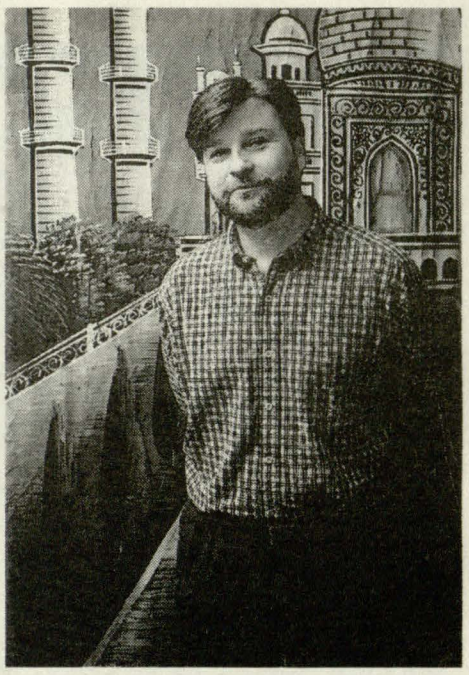
The subtitle for Robert Silance's *Recombinant Images* series is "Divining a Place and Culture." In this work, Silance is designing a new reality as he intuitively edits and combines snippets of unrelated sites to construct a unique cultural relationship. The original places may be as dissimilar as rural South Carolina is from central Italy, but Silance divines an element that ties the two together visually.

His medium is well-suited to this purpose as he explains, "The act of 'taking pictures' involves extracting or editing the three-dimensional reality from an original context and compressing it onto a two-dimensional plane, thereby creating a new reality in the form of a photographic object....The subsequent grouping of images, unrelated to their original context or origin in time and place, compounds the already abstract relationship existing among the object, the artist and the viewer."

*Tabula Rasa*, 1997, Ektacolor print, 40" x 30"

## MARK SLOAN

*Charleston*
*Born Durham, NC, 1957*



For years Mark Sloan has rummaged through the storage rooms of museums around the U.S. looking for idiosyncratic objects to photograph as still life. The exercise itself is interesting, as few are allowed this privilege, but it is Sloan's choice of objects, and the relationships emphasized through their combinations, that most captivates the photographer and the viewer.

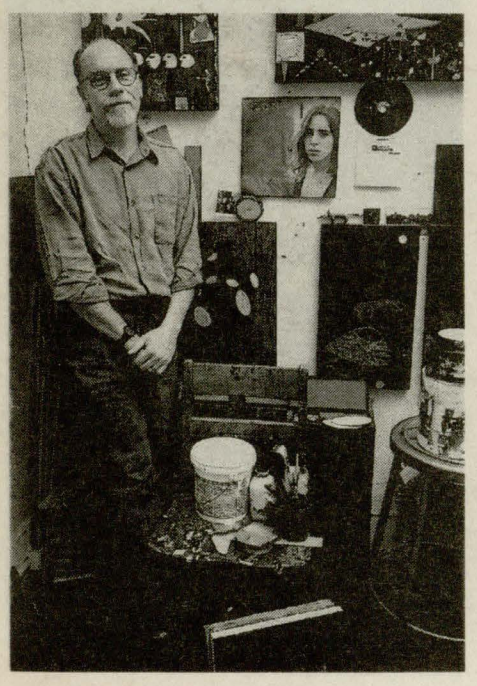
Sloan sees the mind as a storeroom of ideas with access limited by our experiences. He calls into question how we respond to objects in museums. He asks, "Do we respond to objects and images because we have already been encoded, on a biological level, by things like them? Or are our bodies and minds mute repositories which begin anew with each individual consciousness? What are the associations we ascribe to particular objects and why?" Knowing each response will be individual, Sloan nonetheless intends a general outcome through his manipulation and juxtaposition of dissimilar material.

Subtitled, "Meditations on the Museum as Metaphor," this series explores the collections of the Charleston Museum, the oldest museum in North America, which is celebrating its 225th year.

## TOM STANLEY

*Rock Hill*
*Born Fort Hood, TX, 1950*

*en route to hamlet*, 1995-98, acrylic on canvas, 13 ¼" x 13 ¼" ea.



FREE could be stenciled in small black letters on a panel in this series of paintings by Tom Stanley, for it is a word that Stanley often uses in referring to his work. Not the word as it might be associated with cost, but free as in unencumbered by academic rhetoric. Stanley has allowed himself the freedom to draw from personal experience, to develop what he refers to as "free floating visual narratives ...Yes, I like shapes. I like the language of shapes; how shapes possess symbolic meanings; how they recall moments in time; how they resemble something once held in your hand." He talks of a point in his development when he realized he did not have to go looking for a symbolic language — he had accumulated a lifetime of experiences, and he was free to use these in any way he wished. From this realization grew the *en route to hamlet* series.

As the title suggests, this work has been likened to a trip along the rural routes of our region, where highway signs and deserted buildings catch the attention of the driver. There is no prescribed map. Stanley's images and text are arranged in seemingly random order, allowing the viewer to construct the journey - one that is above all a metaphoric journey of self-discovery for viewer and artist alike.

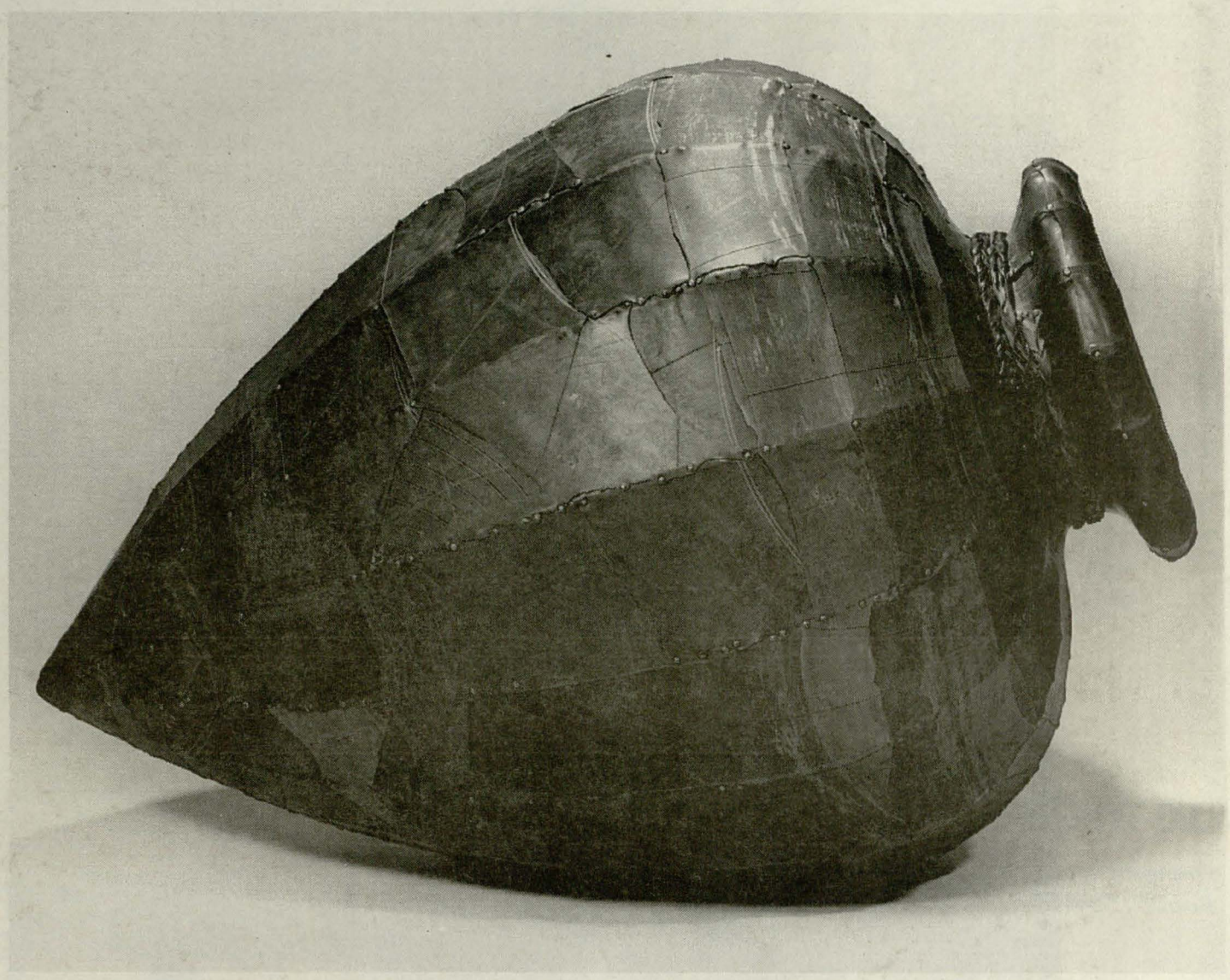

## AIJA STERNS

*Charleston*
*Born Sydney, Australia, 1954*

*Denial #1*, gouache, August 8, 1997, 22" x 30"

Confrontational and direct, Aija Sterns' paintings force us to answer the questions she shouts — "What compels us to speak in a manner that verbally undermines another being's growth and development? Why are these destructive words taken for granted in our everyday language? Why do we unknowingly project our insecurities, inadequacies and sense of inferiority onto others as we go about verbally trampling them?"

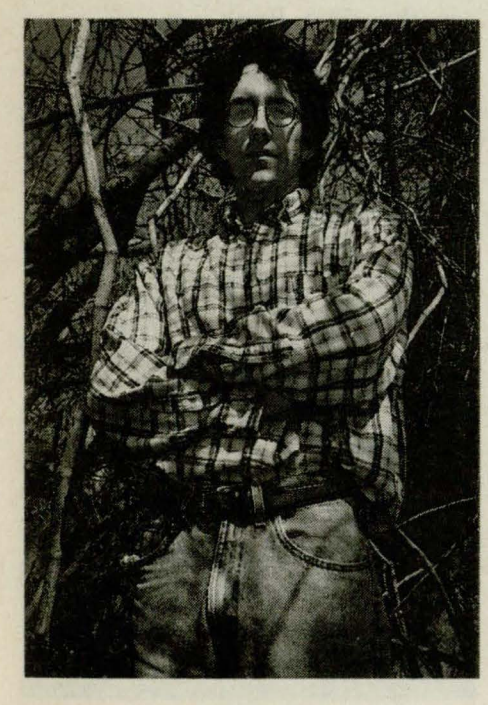
These are difficult questions, and Sterns has chosen an agitated, aggressive approach in which to address them. Strong brush strokes and disquieting color reinforce the messages scrawled across the surface. Verbal abuse is not pretty; neither is her work. But through it she makes a personal statement advocating prevention. Expression is often the first step.



*Vessel 1 (Reclining Nude)*, 1997, inner tube, plywood, 4' x 6' x 4'

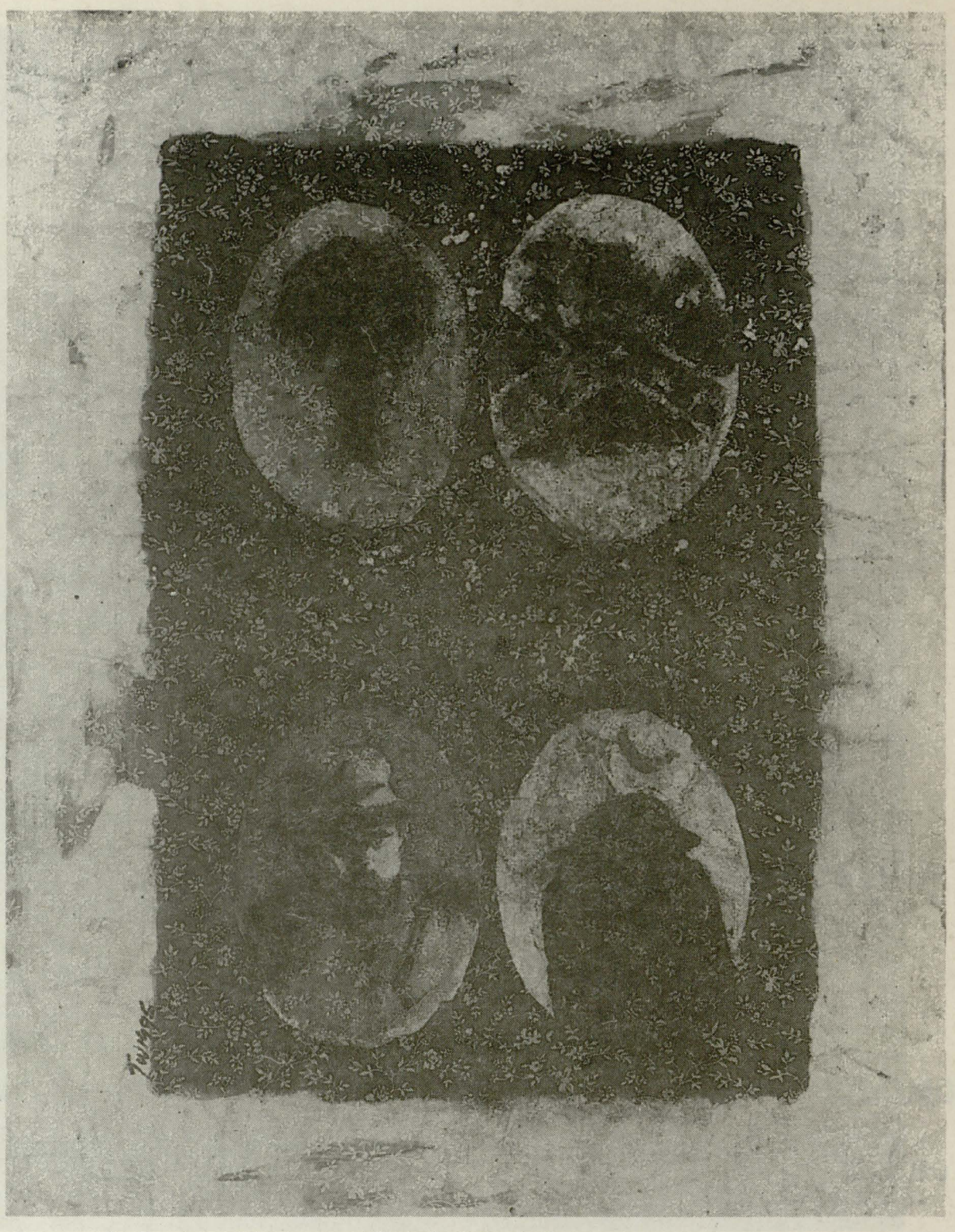
## JOSEPH THOMPSON

*Six Mile*
*Born Columbus, OH, 1962*



Joseph Thompson's work shows a maturity that surpasses that expected of a recent MFA graduate. There is a thoughtfulness in his approach that provides a conceptual framework for his somewhat disparate work. In the three pieces in the exhibition, Thompson explores sculpture from several approaches. In the purely formal *Vessel 1*, the figurative associations are made even more eloquently by his unconventional choice of material. This same material covers the small torso-like box that forces an intimate consideration of the role of the machine in our fast-paced society.

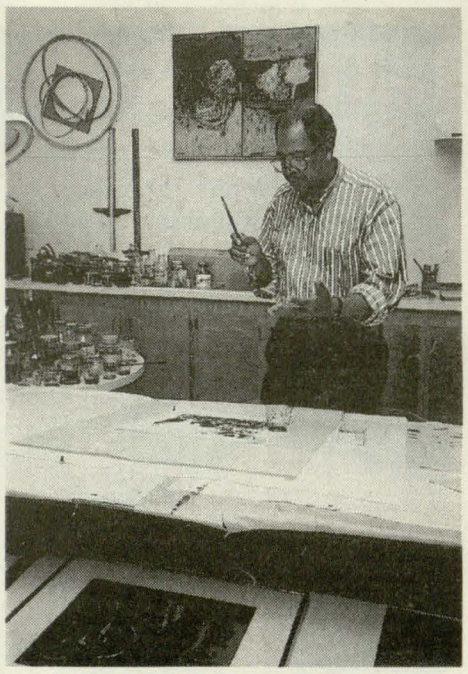
Outdoors Thompson chose to create a work for a site known informally as a "sculpture courtyard." The space is anything but inviting, yet Thompson responded to its vertical confining nature. He writes in his proposal, "The space is loaded; ...it is a site where old meets new, where the brick of a newer addition meets the brick of the original structure ...there is a sense of the banal; it was formed out of necessity; ....but the space feels to me like a cathedral ...." In this space Thompson has placed a Segal-inspired pensive figure, a worker awaiting his reward, inviting viewer interaction and contemplation.



## LEO TWIGGS

*Orangeburg*
*Born St. Stephen, SC, 1934*

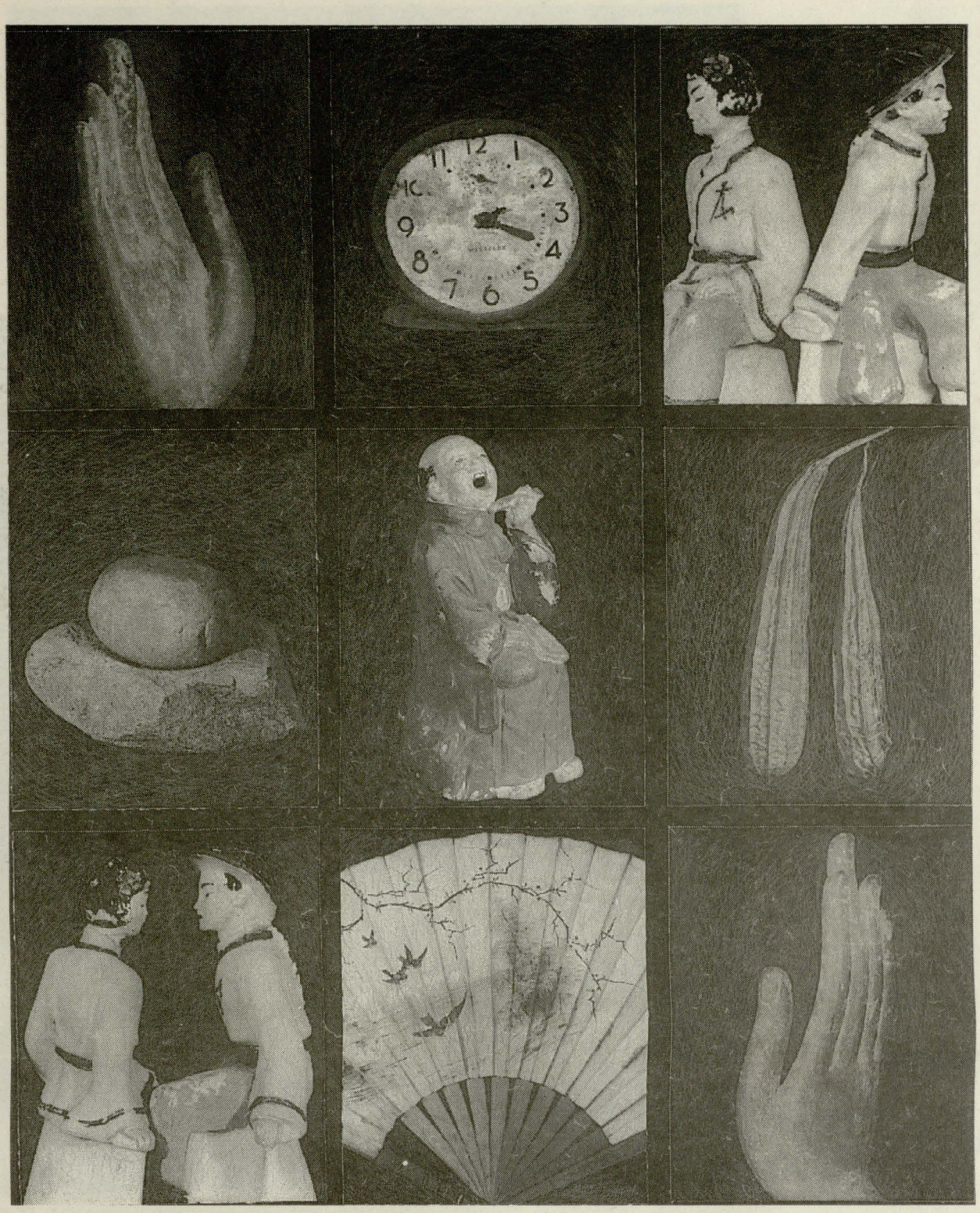
*Commemoration Revisited, Official Memento*, 1997, batik, 13 ½" x 17 ½"



In recent years many artists have chosen to depict the Confederate battle flag. At once an image of heritage and hatred, few are able to view it with objectivity, particularly since its flying over the South Carolina State House has caused such heated debate. Why then has Leo Twiggs chosen this image, not once but twice, for a series of works in batik?

"The confederate flag is an icon that many whites in the South love to remember and most blacks would like to forget; yet within the dichotomy of these two views is the passion within us all to remember the past and to hold on to some special moment of triumph," Twiggs writes. When he first dealt with the topic in 1970, the flag was being raised for the state's Tricentennial. This second series, *Commemoration Revisited*, has enabled Twiggs to consider this image in relationship to our collective history and perhaps more importantly, to his own personal story.

For the past two years Twiggs has researched the Civil War — a large volume about it sits on a shelf in his studio. He has collected objects and materials with which to work — old lace, cloth printed with a subtle pattern reminiscent of another time. Batik is a particularly appropriate medium, for with it he can call to mind the stained, tattered remnants of the past. With the old brown of his dye, he can suggest an ancient relic or represent a soldier in silhouette. Although he started this exploration of the war from a broad perspective, his immersion in it has brought Twiggs back to his own culture, to his own personal account. One of the last works he did in this series was *Remembering Sarah*, a portrait representing his great grandmother at age seven, when she was still bound by slavery.



*Matchmaker*, 1997, gelatin silver print with graphite and conte, 66" x 54"

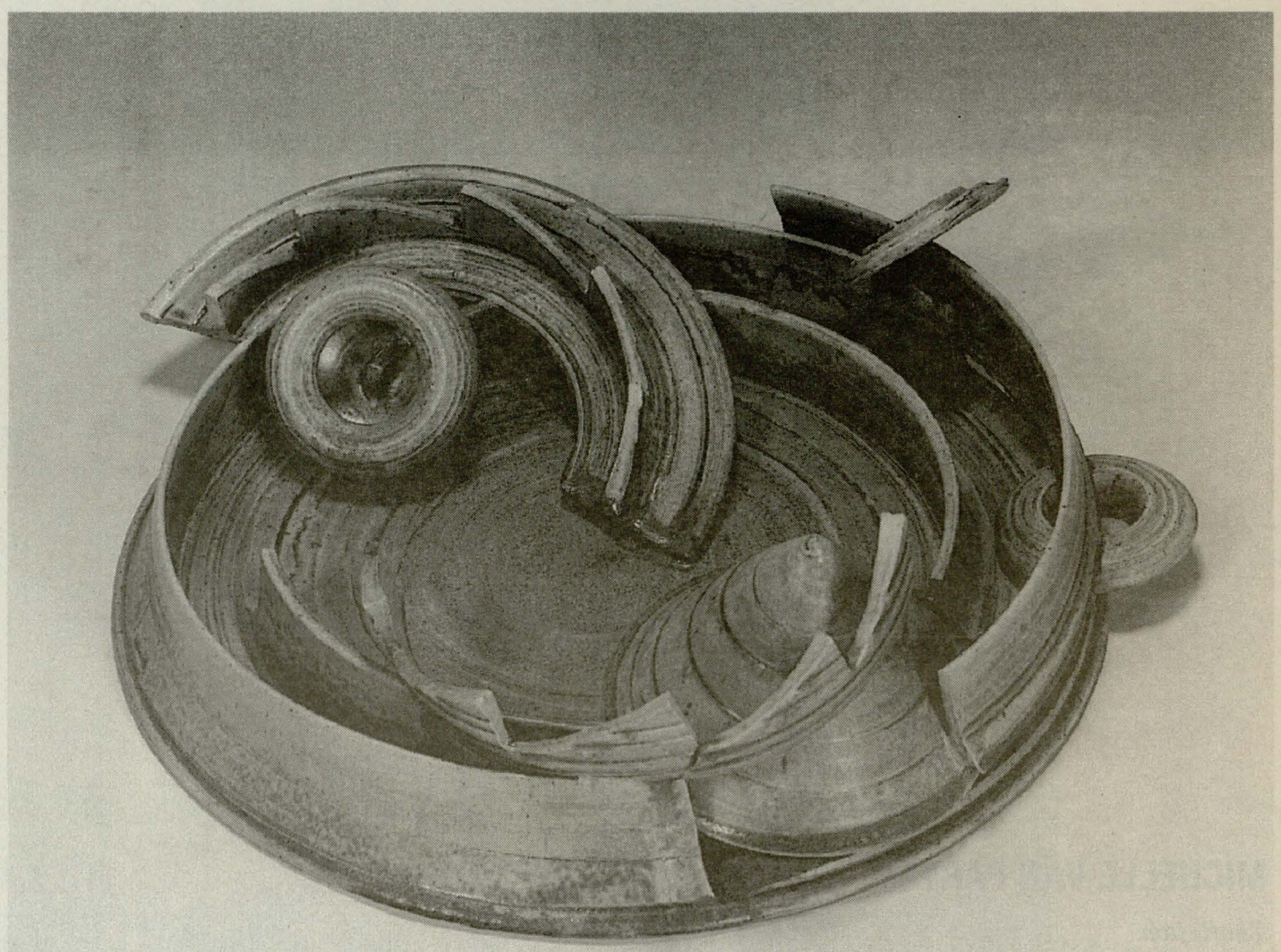
## MICHELLE VAN PARYS

*Charleston*
*Born Richmond, VA, 1960*

How we construct meaning from visual sources is Michelle Van Parys' exploration in this series titled *Second Thoughts*. The work is composed of a select arrangement of photographs, with each photograph focusing on a single, isolated object. Her approach is close-up and direct, without any sense of context. Over the surface of each work the artist has added layers of graphite and subtle color, producing a soft sheen reminiscent of old daguerreotypes, creating a sense of nostalgia and distance in time and thought.

Van Parys explains she began these "visual narratives" as a personal response to the emotional, physical and psychological changes associated with motherhood. It was also her move to Charleston in 1994, and the isolation she initially experienced there, that propelled Van Parys to move away from her exploration of the landscape or the Southwest to this more personal series. She talks about how the act of unpacking her own collection of objects led her to consider the ways in which we ascribe meaning.

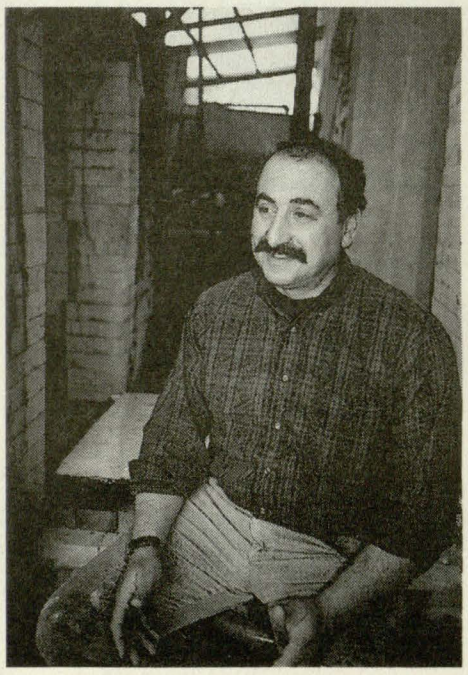
Knowing that objects, by their very nature, are imbued with meaning, Van Parys forces us to reconsider how we interpret these images. It is through their juxtaposition that she establishes a visual vocabulary that is rich and complex, filled with symbolic references and associations that challenge the viewer's preconceptions. She acknowledges that "the implied and intended meanings will be different for each viewer."



## MIKE VATALARO

*Pendleton*
*Born Akron, OH, 1950*

*Vessel/Reconstruction*, 1997, stoneware, 9" x 18" x 18"



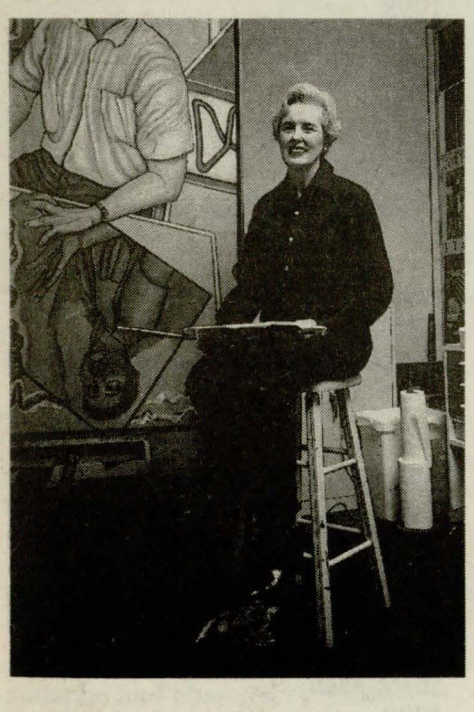
"I have worked with clay for over 25 years now, and I find that the dynamic between the clay and the potter's wheel still provides a great deal of impetus and direction for my work. I am continually intrigued by the energy of throwing and how it is revealed in the finished form."

Mike Vatalaro, a well-established artist, has pushed clay into the realm of contemporary sculpture. As he anticipates a new millennium, Vatalaro is exploring a new direction in his work, one that considers the search for a center in life. These pieces from the series, *Vessels/Reconstruction*, depart from the vertical axial energy of his earlier work. Instead there is a horizontal emphasis as the vessel appears to be thrown apart. Yet in this work all the elements revolve around a strong center, symbolizing the artist's search for that center, for a grounding of self within the constant flux of contemporary society.

## FRANCES S. WOODSIDE

*Greenville*
*Born Pickens, SC, 1934*

*Electrical Surge*, 1996, oil on linen, 72" x 48"



Large-scale figurative work with a psychological edge might describe Fran Woodside's work on the most basic level. Color is a dominant element — intense, acidic, startling color that is often unsettling in its juxtaposition. Unsettling also is the artist's use of space. Woodside will jam figures into an ambiguous space, creating disquieting imbalances and questioning what is meant to be real and what is metaphysical. One must consider these paintings in depth to understand their meaning.

Woodside describes the work "as a tribute to the courage and strength of the human spirit, housed in each individual person, and to the individual's ability to struggle through difficult times to become strong and safe in any environment." If this is not apparent at first glance, then consider specific elements of the composition.

Each painting is a portrait of an individual whom Woodside admires for his or her strength. The subject confronts the viewer with a direct gaze. But in each is also a reflection that calls into question the self-assurance portrayed. This alter ego could reflect the struggles of the past or could predict obstacles yet to be encountered. The interpretation is left as ambiguous as the space within which these individuals exist. To this the artist adds objects that symbolize the safety of the interior environment set against the dangers of the outside world. These color-saturated paintings are complex psychological dramas in which the viewer must take the lead as interpreter.

# TRIENNIAL 98

*Exhibition Checklist*

## JOHN ACORN

*In Storage*
1995
wood, metal, burlap
9' x 4' x 2'

*As a Lure No. 1*
1996
wood, metal, cloth
9' x 3' x 2'

*Gated Community Guard*
1996
wood
10' x 13' x 3'

**Paper Doll*
1996
wood, metal
7' x 4' x 2'

**Pluses and Minuses + —*
1995
wood
7½' x 3½' x 1½'

**Screw Eyes and Chain*
1996
wood, metal
7' x 4' x 2'

## RUSSELL BILES

*Daddy's Babies Series*
1995-97
polychromed ceramic

*Sweet Heart*
1995
19" x 17" x 11"

*Daddy's Shoes*
1995
21" x 10" x 9"

*Boys*
1996
20" x 18" x 12"

*Daddy's Angel*
1996
23" x 15" x 8"
Collection of the Greenville County Museum of Art

*Girls*
1996
22" x 15" x 8"
Collection of the Greenville County Museum of Art

*Mirror, Mirror*
1996
19" x 16" x 12"

*Golden Rule*
1995
21" x 19" x 15"

*Candy Every Girl Wants*
1997
20" x 16" x 12"

*Yours Now*
1996
18" x 17" x 16"

*Looked Good*
1996
19" x 18" x 10"

*Gotta Have It*
1997
17" x 14" x 9"

*Poor Baby*
1996
19" x 16" x 12"

*Quality Time*
1997
21" x 13" x 8"

*Birthday Girl*
1997
19" x 15" x 8"

## ALISON COLLINS

*Skirt Dome*
1997
steel
9.8' x 25' diameter

*Breathing Corset*
1997
cloth, latex, steel, motor
21" x 16" x 8'

## JIM CONNELL

*Red Sandblasted Carved Teapot*
1997
stoneware
11" x 10" x 7"

*Red Sandblasted Carved Teapot*
1997
stoneware
13" x 11" x 7"

*Red Sandblasted Carved Teapot*
1997
stoneware
14" x 3" x 6"

*Red Sandblasted Carved Teapot*
1997
stoneware
17" x 10" x 6"

*Green Carved Teapot*
1998
stoneware
13½" x 9" x 18"

*Green Carved Teapot*
1997
porcelain
12" x 8" x 16"

## DAVID DETRICH

*Lesson*
1997
found objects, steel
10" x 12" x 28"

*May '94, XXXII, No.9 (Artforum)*
1996
magazine, steel, glass
12" x 12"

*American Federation of Women and Minorities or Another F***ing White Male*
1997
fabricated steel letters
3" x 12" x 3"

*Reversible Poetry*
1997
steel, brass plate
26" x 11" x ¾"

## SUSAN FILLEY

*Dancing Teapot Series (3)*
1997-98

*Tripod Bird*
1997
porcelain
11½" x 7" x 5"

*Green Cockade*
1998
porcelain
10¾" x 6" x 4"

*Little Boy Blue*
1998
porcelain
7" x 4½" x 3"

*Cockatoo Teapot*
1998
porcelain
12½" x 7" x 4½"

*Blue Blushed Teapot*
1998
porcelain
9" x 6" x 5½"

*Teapot Blushed with Blue*
1998
porcelain
9" x 7" x 6"

## JACK GERSTNER

*(you call it a) Forest*
1998
tree trunks and branches, found wood, iron weights, anvil, rope, ladder

## J. SCOTT GOLDSMITH

*Egg Juggler*
August 1997
acrylic on canvas, wood with ceramic rooster and hen
48" x 68"

*The Prayer*
July 1997
acrylic on canvas, wood with ceramic praying hands
49" x 51"

## STEVEN HOGUE

*Mr. Fowler*
1997
toned silver print
10" x 10"

*Steve #4*
1997
toned silver print
10" x 10"

*Elfboy*
1997
toned silver print
10" x 10"

*Sarah/Naomi*
1997
toned silver print
10" x 10"

*John*
1998
toned silver print
10" x 10"

*Kate*
1998
toned silver print
10" x 10"

*Lisa*
1998
toned silver print
10" x 10"

## DAVID J. P. HOOKER

*Teapot: Musing on Farming*
1997
ceramic
16" x 6" x 24"

*Stack-Man*
1998
ceramic
23" x 10" x 7"

*** Included in satellite exhibition at NationsBank Plaza**

*Tell-A-Vision*
1998
ceramic
27" x 12" x 12"

*Listening Totem: Ping*
1998
ceramic, wood
86" x 13½" x 12½"

## TERRY K. HUNTER

*Chicken Little's Dilemma*
1998
mixed media drawing
40" x 30"

*In the Name of the Father*
1997
mixed media drawing
40" x 30"

*Bootstraps?! I*
1996
etching
16" x 20"

*Bootstraps?! II*
1996
etching
16" x 20"

## PETER LENZO

**Joseph*
1997
mixed media
15" x 6½" x 17½"

**Roxanne*
1997
mixed media
15" x 6½" x 17½"

**Tyler*
1997
mixed media
15" x 6½" x 17½"

*Portable Gun Case Mary Altar*
1998
mixed media
54" x 88" x 4"

## KIT LONEY

*Fragmented Quartzite Torso*
1996
gouache and charcoal on paper, rayon, silk, wool, cotton
70" x 23"

*Standing Figure (from the Worcester Museum)*
1996
gouache and charcoal on paper, handmade paper, rayon, silk, wool, cotton
70" x 22"

*Red Quartzite Torso*
1996
gouache and charcoal on paper, handmade paper, wool, silk, rayon, cotton
93" x 23"

## LEE MALERICH

*Welkome to Our Gallant Allies*
1997
hand embroidery on pieced fabrics
8½" x 5¾"
Collection of Carol Connor

*Immoderately Cut*
1997
hand embroidery on pieced fabrics
8¾" x 5¾"

*Think of Blue*
1997
hand embroidery on pieced fabrics
8½" x 5¾"

*Ghost Breast*
1997
hand embroidery on pieced fabrics
8¾" x 5¾"
Collection of Fran Gardner Perry

*The Whistle Blower*
1997
hand embroidery on pieced fabrics
8¾" x 5¾"

*Healing on Alta Vista*
1997
hand embroidery on pieced fabrics
8½" x 5¾"
Collection of Susan Catalano

*The Manual World*
1997
hand embroidery on pieced fabrics
8½" x 5¾"

*Still Here No Question*
1998
hand embroidery on pieced fabrics
8½" x 5¾"

## LARRY MERRIMAN

**Eden Eaten #3*
1998
cardboard boxes, hot glue

## PHILIP MULLEN

*20 Boxes*
November 1996
acrylic on canvas
72" x 52"

*Apples*
December 1996
acrylic on canvas
12" x 18"

*White Vase #2*
May 1997
acrylic on canvas
24" x 18"

## JANE NODINE

*distressed image II*
1997
mixed media drawing on panel
62" x 44"

*see no evil*
1997
computer manipulated mixed media drawing
25" x 23"

**preservation*
1997
mixed media drawing
15" x 24½"

**absolution*
1997
manipulated photography
16¾" x 13"

**Situation*
1997
manipulated photography
14" x 29¾"

**Lavalier*
1997
manipulated photography
14¼" x 11½"

**Utensil*
1997
manipulated photography
13½" x 9¾"

**Chumming the Waters*
1997
manipulated photography
10¾" x 13½"

**Splendid Fetter*
1997
manipulated photography
13" x 9"

**The Penland Experience*
1997
manipulated photography
14" x 11"

## MARCELO NOVO

*Monument I*
1998
acrylic on canvas
58" x 42"

*Monument II*
1998
acrylic on canvas
58" x 42"

*Foaling*
1998
acrylic on canvas
42" x 58"

## JORGE OTERO

*Tenebrae: Charleston, Nocturnal Cityscapes Series*
1996

*Sycamore Tree, College of Charleston*
c-print
13" x 13"

*The Old Guardhouse*
c-print
13" x 13"

*Wragg Square*
c-print
13" x 13"

*Charleston Museum*
c-print
13" x 13"

*B.P. Station*
c-print
13" x 13"

*Patriot's Point*
c-print
13" x 13"

## HERB PARKER

*Relationships #1*
1995
wood, bone, resin, foam, steel, glass, bronze, copper, copper leaf
24" x 24" x 15"

*Relationships #2*
1995
wood, lead, steel, rubber, resin, wax, foam, bronze, cork
27" x 24" x 15"

*Relationships #3*
1995
wood, cast iron, steel, resin, glass, plastic, foam, bronze
25" x 16" x 12"

## CLIFFTON PEACOCK

*Bed*
1996
oil on canvas
74½" x 71"

* Included in satellite exhibition at NationsBank Plaza

*Aurora*
1997
oil on canvas
105½" x 91"

## TERESA PRATER

*False Annunciation*
1997
charcoal on matboard
32" x 40"

*Silent Conversation*
1997
charcoal on matboard
32" x 40"

*Interior Storm*
1997
charcoal on matboard
32" x 40"

*Tempestuous Flight*
1998
charcoal on matboard
32" x 40"

## ED RICE

*Presbyterian*
1998
oil on canvas
48" x 30"

*Presbyterian II*
1998
oil on panel
48" x 48"

## MARY ELLEN RICE

*Witness*
1997
silver gelatin print
8½" x 12½"

*The American Way*
1997
silver gelatin print
8½" x 12½"

*Belong*
1997
silver gelatin print
9" x 12"

*Become*
1997
silver gelatin print
9" x 12"

*Search*
1997
silver gelatin print
9" x 12"

*Struggle*
1997
silver gelatin print
9" x 12"

*Depart*
1997
silver gelatin print
9" x 12"

## VIRGINIA SCOTCHIE

*Double Pipe*
1997
clay, glaze, wood
45" x 45" x 10"

*Knob Funnels*
1998
clay, glaze
9" x 18" x 18"

*Turquoise Funnels*
1998
clay, glaze
7" x 21" x 10"

*Indigo-Bronze Funnels*
1998
clay, glaze
13" x 15" x 7"

*Maize-Bronze Funnels*
1998
clay, glaze
12" x 13" x 7½"

## SUSANNAH SIGALOFF

*Nancy Spungeon*
1996
acrylic on canvas
42" x 30"

*Jezebel*
1996
acrylic on canvas
42" x 30"

*Bonnie Parker*
1996
acrylic on canvas
42" x 30"

*Edie Sedgewick*
1996
acrylic on canvas
42" x 30"

## ROBERT SILANCE

*Recombinant Images Series*
1997

*Columbus, IN - Blue Star Highway, SC*
Washington, DC - Charleston, SC
c-print
5" x 7½"

*Kirkehylinge, Denmark - Liguria, Italy*
c-print
5½" x 4"

*Wren Church, SC - Copenhagen, Denmark*
c-print
2½" x 7½"

*Fort Sumter, SC - Greenville, SC*
c-print
2½" x 7½"

*Pompeii, Italy - Liguria, Italy - Amalfi, Italy*
c-print
2½" x 11½"

*Easley, SC*
c-print
2½" x 11½"

*Long Beach Island, NJ - Columbia, SC*
c-print
2½" x 7½"

*Venice, Italy - Rome, Italy*
c-print
4" x 5½"

## MARK SLOAN

*Tabula Rasa Series (3)*
1997
ektacolor prints
40" x 30" (each)

## TOM STANLEY

*en route to hamlet*
1995-1998
acrylic on canvas
13 ¾" x 13 ¾" (each)

## AIJA STERNS

*Legacy*
February 10, 1997
gouache
30" x 22"

*Losing Face*
March 24, 1997
gouache
30" x 22"

*Denial #1*
August 8, 1997
gouache
30" x 22"

*Jerk*
September 6, 1997
gouache
30" x 22"

## JOSEPH THOMPSON

*Vessel 1 (Reclining Nude)*
1997
inner tube, plywood
4' x 6' x 4'

*Urgent*
1998
wood, inner tube, steel
18" x 12" x 6"

*Notes on Poetry and the Life of the Long-Timer*
1998
steel, bronze, wood, television

## LEO TWIGGS

*Commemoration Revisited Series*
1997-98

*Flag*
1998
mixed media
36" x 48"

*Official Momento*
1997
batik
13½" x 17½"

*Remembering Sarah*
1997
batik and mixed media
24" x 18"
Collection of the Gibbes Museum of Art

## MICHELLE VAN PARYS

*Matchmaker*
1997
gelatin silver print with graphite and conté
66" x 54"

*Fractured Icons*
1997
gelatin silver print with graphite and conté
44" x 36"

## MIKE VATALARO

*Vessel/Reconstruction*
1997
stoneware
9" x 18" x 18"

*Vessel/Reconstruction*
1997
stoneware
8" x 23" x 23"

*Vessel/Reconstruction*
1997
stoneware
10" x 24" x 24"

## FRANCES WOODSIDE

*Electrical Surge*
1996
oil on linen
72" x 48"

*Floating Strong Man*
1996
oil on linen
48" x 72"

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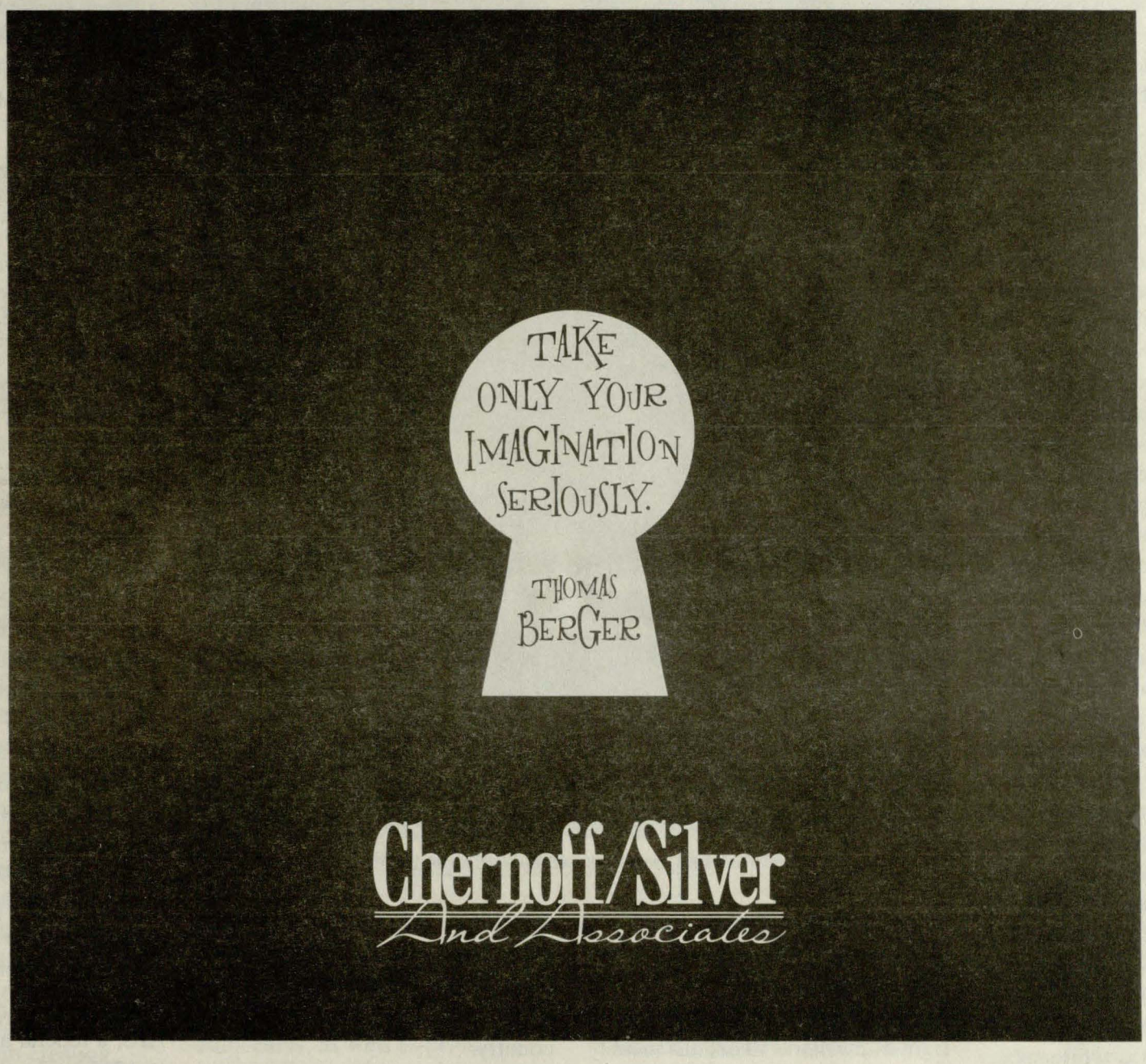
**All works are on loan from the artists unless otherwise specified.**


TAKE
ONLY YOUR
IMAGINATION
SERIOUSLY.
THOMAS
BERGER
Chernoff/Silver
And Associates

# TOWARDS A NEW DEFINITION OF PUBLIC ART

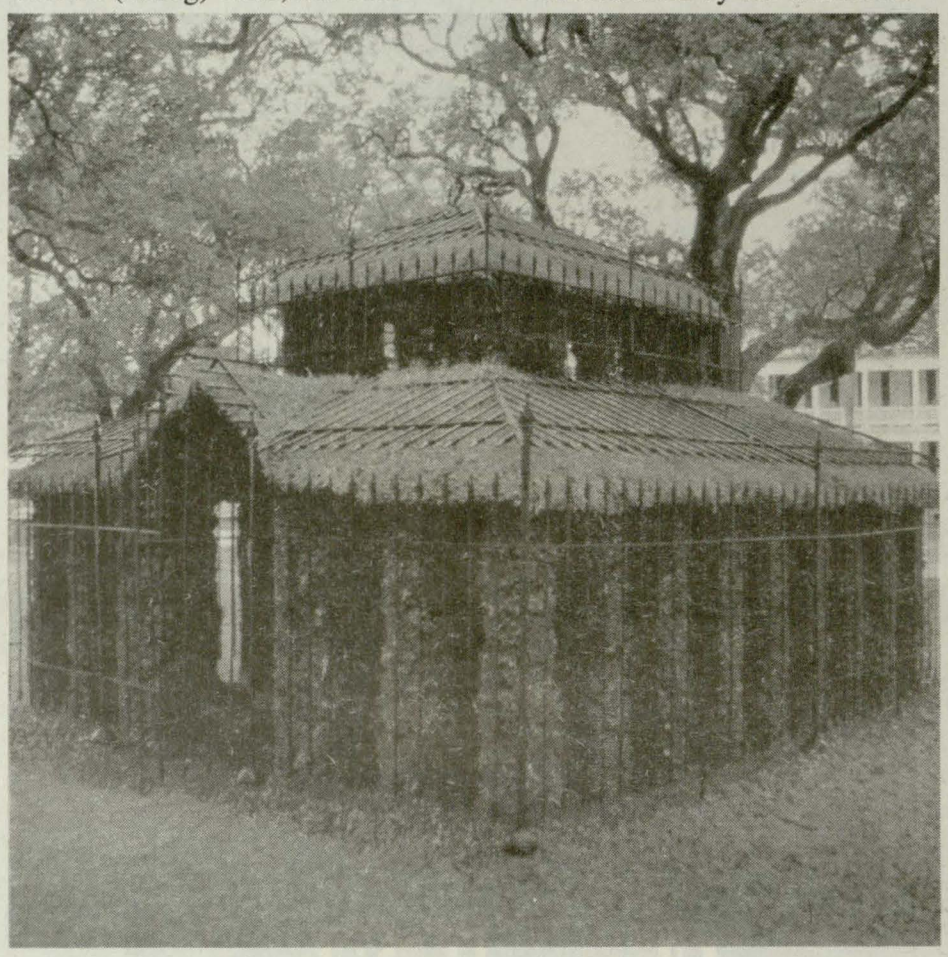
*Within the Modernist aesthetic all art stands outside life, in a space of its own, metaphorically embodied in the Plexiglas display case, the bare white gallery, the aluminum frame. When one seeks a deeper connection between art and life than this, Modernism is over.*

**— ARTHUR DANTO**

In the twentieth-century a sharp divide between artist and audience formed. For most contemporary artists the idea of art as an individualistic means of expression is seen as a forgone conclusion. For most viewers, much of contemporary art registers as incomprehensible. During the latter part of our century many individuals in the art community, in an attempt to bridge this chasm, have sought strategies for re-asserting a common, shared, public art experience. One result of this has been a resurgence in art which is envisioned, produced and presented as "public art." This art differs from the traditional monument in the square. It is usually site-specific, bearing a relationship to the particular environment and audience for which it is created. In aiming to address a general audience, public works have often been flash points for broader issues of power and politics. In spite of this, the redefinition of public art has resulted in a renaissance of work that exists beyond the white cube.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF PUBLIC ART IN THE UNITED STATES

In spite of the fact that since mid-century there has been a strong resurgence in American public art, it is still in its infancy compared to other cultures and compared to the primary influence America grew out of — the Western European tradition. Individualism and diversity have also helped define America's culture and have prevented the development of a shared cultural identity. As Harriett Senie states in her introduction to *Contemporary Public Sculpture*, "In this country public art, based largely on European precedent and instigated by members of the monied (ruling) class, has been valued as important for a variety of esthetic and socio economic reasons, but considerable ambivalence about it was apparent right at the start."[1] This has meant that from the beginning public art has not been without controversy. In 1832, Congress commissioned a statue of George Washington from the sculptor Horatio Greenough, which was clearly derivative of classical Greek and Roman sculpture. The public would not accept this idealized depiction of a partially clothed Washington and the work was quickly removed from its intended site.



Herb Parker, *Enclosure: Vista*, steel, iron, glass, sod, rammed earth, 1997

Early American public works were concentrated in Washington as well as Philadelphia and later Chicago and New York, and usually took the form of sculpture as monument or memorial. In the latter part of the nineteenth-century, Civil War monuments were, as H. W. Janson notes, "commissioned by the hundreds."[2] These and other sculptural works were increasingly being placed in the city squares and greenspaces of growing cities across the country.

The Works Progress Administration (WPA), formed in the 1930s, represented the beginning of a broader agenda for government-supported public art. Established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933, the WPA continued until 1943 and employed many artists who were paid for their work. The results of artists working for the WPA were, according to Jenny Dixon, "some 4,000 murals, 120,000 easel works, 18,000 sculptures and 14,000 prints, (which) represented a government commitment to artists as valued contributors to society."[3] One example of a work of this type in South Carolina was a fresco painted by Charleston artist William Halsey as part of a WPA renovation project at the Dock Street Theatre in downtown Charleston.[4]

After this program there was little directed public art activity until the early 1960s when, during the Kennedy administration, there was renewed interest in government support for the arts and hopes for establishing a national culture. After the triumph of Abstract Expressionism, America was poised to step up to the role of international leader in the arts. In 1963, under the General Services Administration (GSA), which was and still is in charge of all federal buildings, the federal government renewed its commitment to supporting public art by establishing a voluntary percent for art program where one half of one percent of the construction costs of new federal buildings would be used for art.[5] The program had a rocky start and was suspended in 1966 due to budget difficulties and some controversy over an early project, but was reactivated during the early '70s.

The National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency established in 1965 to develop and support the arts, began its own Art-in-Public-Places program in 1967. The first project under this program provided matching funds for the commission in 1969 of a sculpture by Alexander Calder for the city of Grand Rapids Michigan. Calder's work, along with an untitled Picasso sculpture erected in Chicago in 1967 which was privately funded, represented two of the first manifestations of public art which were later dubbed "plop art," referring to the idea of

modernist sculpture which is plopped into already existing urban environments. Most of the early works created during the revival of public art in the 1960s were abstract modernist sculptures by artists who were selected for their level of fame and recognition rather than for the appropriateness of the work for the site. Generally speaking there was no preliminary involvement with the public and usually no specific relationship of the work to the site. The purpose of these works was not so much to engage the general public but more to function as symbols of high culture.

During the 1970s public art began to change and projects started to be more site-sensitive, and site-responsive. Judy Bacca's mural, known as the *Great Wall of Los Angeles*, (actual title *The History of Los Angeles*) and begun in 1976 was one example of this. Bacca's work "depicts local history from the point of view of groups and events that have been traditionally ignored by the mainstream."[6] In general, art produced during this period was more time and/or culture specific moving away from an emphasis on formal, art-centered issues. Rather than a concern with depicting universals, many artists, including an increasing number of women artists and artists of color, became more concerned with creating work that spoke to a particular group or communities' concerns.

The real resurgence of public art in the United States occurred during the 1980s, riding the wave of Reagonomics, which created economic optimism for many and an increased interest, at times superficial, in art in general. During this time, aided by the proliferation of state and local arts agencies, public art became its own industry and the processes and mechanisms for producing public works were established. A majority of the percent for art programs across the country were established during the 1980s.[7] As Avis Berman states in an article from 1991, "Administrators with years of experience in funding and commissioning works of art for public places confirm that activity continues to accelerate and that major changes have occurred in how federal, state and local authorities, as well as private corporations and real estate developers, think about enhancing public places with art."[8] During the '80s art began to be closely tied to economic development. Many promoted the idea that if a community had a strong cultural life, business would develop there, more people would want to live there and so economic growth would occur.

Patrick Dougherty, *Sittin' Pretty*, 1996, SC Botanical Garden, Clemson University

Amid this resurgence of public art, conflicts about the role of public art in the United States crystallized in two high profile cases. The controversies and strikingly different outcomes surrounding Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* and Maya Lin's *Vietnam Veteran's Memorial* raised important issues about public art and focused attention on the gap between many contemporary artists' intentions and public perceptions. Serra's work, a large, curved sheet of Cor-Ten steel commissioned by the GSA and erected in 1981 which divided the plaza in front of two federal office buildings in New York, was dismantled and, in essence, destroyed in 1989 after a protracted legal battle. The selection of Lin's black granite memorial, also erected in '81, which listed the names of all who died in the Vietnam War, was also contentious, but the work is now one of the most visited memorials in the country. The high profile debate surrounding both of these projects caused many people, including those in the artworld, to consider certain questions: What defines public art? Is it art for the public or just art in a public space? Should the artist take into account the "public" aspect of the work? Should the art relate to the space it is placed in? Is educational information for the intended audience necessary? Who decides what kind of art should be public art? Who are the patrons of public art?

As the focus began to shift from artwork placed in an environment with no regard for the function of the space to art which utilized the public environment to contribute to the meaning of the work, a re-definition of public art emerged. By placing work directly in the public sphere, artists such as Dennis Adams in his bus shelters, Barbara Kruger in her billboards or Jenny Holzer in her electronic signboards, reached a new "public" audience of individuals who encountered the work as part of their daily existence. Large scale projects, featuring the work of many artists, such as Battery Park City in New York City or the public art project at NOAA Western Regional Center in Seattle, Washington resulted in site-specific public art. A new definition of public art began to evolve, also, through increased critical attention. The Winter 1989 edition of *Art Journal* dedicated to public art was evidence of an emerging critical discourse on these issues.

## PUBLIC ART IN SOUTH CAROLINA

The development of public art in this state has followed a similar course, although the rapid growth and redefinition which occurred in the nation during the 1980s has been slower to catch on in South Carolina. More activity has occurred here during the last

Linda McCune, Drawing for hourglass sculpture for Archives & History Center, 1997

decade in the creation of both permanent and temporary works. There is currently no mandated percent for art legislation in South Carolina although a 1981 Budget and Control Board resolution encourages state facilities to set aside one half of one percent of construction/renovation budgets for the purchase of artwork. The new South Carolina Archives and History Center in Columbia, which will open to the public in late May of this year, has allocated a percentage of their construction budget to commission several works as well as purchase existing work. One piece, a commissioned work by South Carolina artist Linda McCune, will consist of a large hourglass form in which fragmented archival records, instead of sand, mark the passage of time.

Other major public art initiatives have occurred in the state within the last decade. In 1988 The Rock Hill Economics Development Corporation commissioned nationally-known artist Audrey Flack to create a work for the Gateway, an area serving as an actual and metaphorical entrance to the city of Rock Hill. Flack created *Civitas*, a group of monumental female figures symbolizing different aspects of the city. An example of permanent work which will be altered through the course of time by the natural environment is the group of nature-based sculpture at the South Carolina Botanical Garden in Clemson, SC. Each year, since 1995, artists including Herb Parker, Brian Rust, Patrick Dougherty, Alfio Bonanno, Gilles Bruni and Marc Babarit have been commissioned to create site-specific works for the Garden. *Crucible*, created by Herb Parker in 1995, is a domed structure with an oculus which is covered with plantings which vary according to the season. These pieces all exemplify recent trends in public art where work is uniquely and fundamentally integrated into the site for which it is created.

Another major initiative currently underway in the state is the selection of an artist and design for an African-American History Monument to be erected on the Statehouse grounds in Columbia. Sen. Darrell Jackson sponsored the original legislation for the monument in 1994 as part of the solution to the conflict over the Confederate Flag issue. The legislation was re-introduced in 1995 and passed in 1996. During the fall of 1996 the African-American Mounument Commission began meeting. The Commission saw the need for public input and arranged for public hearings across the state and also appointed a Citizen's Advisory Committee to bring additional expertise to the project. This group developed a Design Prospectus based on input from the public hearings and the dedication date for the monument was set for January 1, 2000. This process, involving input from many sectors of the community, reflects the newer approach to public art which uses public input to help direct the selection process and gives those involved a method of gaining ownership in the process and final result.

In addition to these directed projects, individual works of public art have been created in different areas of the state. One example is a 1995 work at the Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium created by Winston Wingo entitled *Stop the Violence*. This piece was made partially with 71 guns collected during a Goods-for-Guns project. Another artist from the upstate, John Acorn has created public commisssions throughout his career. Acorn, now retired Chair of Clemson University's Art Department, has created public work in Easley, Greenville, Manning, Sumter and Charleston. Joe Walters, an artist who creates site-specific works utilizing hierarchical groupings of animal forms, created a work for the Joseph Moss Justice Center in York. The Fine Arts Center of Kershaw, on a rotating basis, displays sculptural works outside of their Arts Education Facility. These are only a few examples of individual projects which are increasingly becoming standard practice in terms of initiatives for arts organizations and methods of working for individual artists.

In the major metropolitan areas of the state, arts organizations and and local government entities are working to develop an overall vision for public art in their city. Recently the Cultural Council of Richland and Lexington Counties in Columbia began a public sculpture program now called the Public Art and Design Program and to date four pieces of sculpture have been installed. These include *Jubilaeus* by Gretchen Lothrop, *Passages* by Greg Fitzpatrick, and *The Instrument* by Mike Williams, all South Carolina artists. A fourth work at the Riverbanks Zoo is a bronze baby elephant created by Donna Dobberfuhl from Texas. In the upstate, the city of Greenville formed a Sculpture in Public Places Committee in 1994, and they are currently working on developing an overall policy for public art in the city. In 1996, a sculptural work by South Carolina artist Bob Doster was donated to the city and installed on Main Street. The City of Charleston's Office of Cultural Affairs is also in the process of developing a comprehensive plan for public art in their city. They are particularly interested in strategies of integrating the old with the new, as Charleston is a city rich in history, with a tradition of emphasis on historical preservation.

The first large-scale exhibition of temporary, public installation in the United States, *Places with a Past: New Site Specific Art at Charleston's Spoleto Festival*, was held in Charleston in 1991 and featured 17 works created in a variety of sites throughout the city. Artists utilized an old garage off of Pinckney St., The Avery Research Center for African-American History and Culture, the U.S. Customs House, Parish Hall of the Circular Congregational Church and the old city jail, among other sites, to create temporary installations. The international roster of artists included Cindy Sherman, Christian Boltanski,

Antony Gormley, David Hammons and Ann Hamilton. The groups involved decided that several of the works, pieces by Ronald Jones, Houston Conwill and David Hammons, would be retained as permanent installations. Last year's Spoleto exhibition, *human/nature*, continued the theme of site-specific installations, this time focusing more on issues of nature rather than culture. Works included a fort sited on the Battery and constructed of sod and iron by Charleston artist Herb Parker, a garden referencing African-American coastal history by Martha Jackson-Jarvis located on the grounds of St. Luke's Reformed Episcopal Church and a video installation by Mary Lucier in an empty, downtown warehouse.

The nature of these types of temporary works, which are now ubiquitous in the artworld, allows artists to inject their work into the public sphere, often more provocatively than would be possible with permanent work. The freedom to experiment, to push boundaries and to even fail with temporary art stands in marked contrast to traditional public art-making which, until recently, demanded that works be enduring symbols which would stand the test of time for future generations.

One aspect of the increased interest in public art is a renewed desire on the part of some members of the artworld to arrive at a new, more relevant place in society. Part of this desire reflects a hope for engagement of and connection with an audience. One of the difficulties in this aim lies in the very different role artists have played, up to this point, in modern society. The modern notion of the avant-garde presumed the artist would be out front, outside the common experience, leading each progressive change in culture. With the breakdown of Modernism, this

Audrey Flack, *Civitas*, 1990,
Courtesy the City of Rock Hill

notion has become obsolete, yet the alienation between artist and audience remains. Creating work which exists in the public sphere and has a relationship to its site has been one way artists have attempted to re-integrate their work into society. Utilizing the context of a particular site in order to further develop the meaning of a work is a concrete manifestation of the realization that nothing exists in a vacuum. Everything functions within its environment and the space between things defines meaning and existence as much as the things themselves.

As the more successful examples show, public art can provide a place where individual artists' visions intersect with universal issues resulting in a communal experience. This experience does not have to be strictly or narrowly defined, but hopefully will be meaningful and relevant for both artist and audience. Allison Gamble points out what may in fact be the real "use" of public art in our age: "The new public art offers no solutions...but at its best it can rephrase the questions."[9] The majority of public works, temporary or otherwise, will be produced only if members of the artworld continue to question, develop and demand a relevant role in society. For public art to truly flourish in this country, the gulf between art and audience will have to be better bridged.

*Lori Kornegay is the Assistant Visual Arts Director at the South Carolina Arts Commission.*

Notes:

Arthur Danto, quoted by Suzi Gablik, "Removing the Frame," New Art Examiner 21 (January 1994), p. 14.

[1] Harriet Senie, Contemporary Public Sculpture (New York: Oxford Press, 1992) p. 5.

[2] Robert Rosenblum and H.W. Janson, 19th Century Art (New York: Harry Abrahms, 1984) p.495.

[3] Jenny Dixon, "Public Domain," American Craft 48 (June 1988) p. 62.

[4] Lisë Swensson, South Carolina Art: Selections from the South Carolina State Museum Collection (Columbia: State Printing Company, 1991) p. 37.

[5] Dixon, p. 62.

[6] Senie, p. 27.

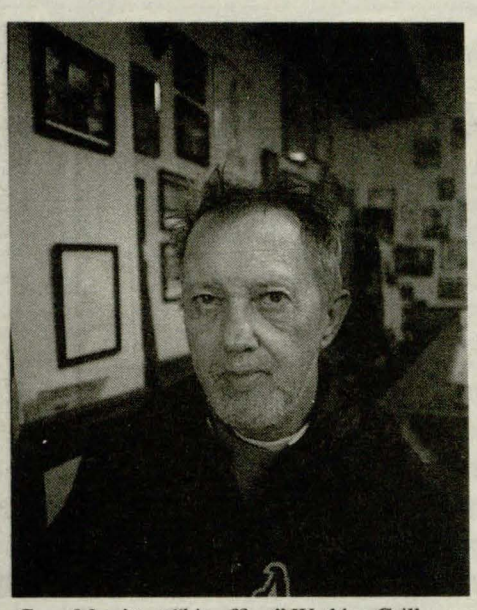
[7] Pam Korza, Going Public (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1988) p. 287.

[8] Avis Berman, "Public Sculpture's New Look," ARTnews 90 (September 1991) p. 102.

[9] Allison Gamble, "Reframing a Movement," New Art Examiner 21 (January 1994) p. 19.

# GENE'S ART INC'S

Clyde Eugene Merritt lives in upstate South Carolina where for the past six years he has produced thousands of remarkable line drawings on paper. Whether his subjects include stars from old movies and television re-runs or personalities from popular music and American wrestling, his depictions reflect a personal visual language not overtly influenced by any aesthetic operation other than his own.



Gene Merritt at "his office," Watkins Grill

Twenty-one of Merritt's drawings were included in the exhibition *Still Worth Keeping* at Winthrop University Galleries in 1997. Those same works are now in the collection of the South Carolina State Museum and will be part of a traveling exhibition organized by the museum and available in the summer of 1998. One of the museum's primary motives for acquiring the work of this self-taught artist is his connection to South Carolina and the community in which he lives.

Merritt made his first drawings while sitting at a table in "his office" - a local diner. The downtown eatery has been his studio, gallery and link to a broader world. The wall near his table still exhibits the first dollar bill he earned from his drawings, his depiction of Humphrey Bogart, framed newspaper articles about Merritt, and a photograph of the artist wearing a cowboy hat and sunglasses.

Born in Columbia in 1936, Merritt's early childhood was marked by instability and his mother's untimely death. At about the age of five, he experienced an extended fever during a bout with pneumonia that left him with organic brain damage, a disability he readily admits and discusses in terms of his life-long situation. Although under the care of the department of social services, he has lived an uncertain, yet independent life since his father's death in the early 1970s.

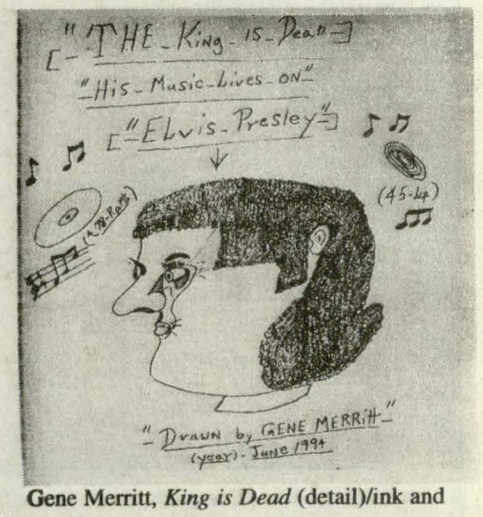
Merritt's interest in drawing is not purely motivated by personal expression. It is also a means to earn petty cash. The idea of working like everyone else is crucial. Even as he completes drawings which he refers to as "paperwork," Merritt seriously contends that he works for local loan companies, a BMW dealership and a pawn shop. These delusions are evidenced as he regularly hands out business cards collected from area agencies with his "autograph" handwritten on the back: "Gene's Art Inc's," the same trademark used to sign his drawings. And because of his mild, gentle manner, most people accept his imagined business proposals as well as his drawings with the same humor, tolerance and understanding.

Only a few regional curators and trained artists have expressed interest in Merritt's work. In fact, American "outsider" or folk art enthusiasts in general have not exhibited a curiosity for this artist whose small works display only occasional color and feature little of the rural flash that is often indicative of the self-taught aesthetic on the American scene. Interestingly, the opposite appears to be true in Europe, where ninety of Merritt's drawings were recently accessioned into the permanent collection of the internationally recognized Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, Switzerland. From February 3 through May 24, 1998, Merritt's work is being featured there in a one-person exhibition. Established by the French modernist painter Jean Dubuffet, the Collection de l'Art Brut acquires, preserves and studies art created "solely on the basis of criteria of personal inventiveness and freedom from cultural norms." The rejection of academic dogma and the search for a purer form of art have been components of the modernist aesthetic since the early 19th century. The artistic search has stretched from Romanticism to an appreciation of children's art to the appropriation of art from non-western cultures. Dubuffet's contribution and advocacy of a major collection of what he considered to be "raw art" had a major impact on many modern artists. Merritt's work, which reflects a rawness of daily human experience, seems most comfortable in this tradition.

His first drawings, which he called "cartoons," were completed with ball point pen on napkins, lined writing paper or the occasional piece of drawing paper. Most of these works were finely drafted heads in a cubist-like profile. The furthest eye of each facial profile extended beyond the nose so it could be seen. These early examples revealed the segmented articulation of lines that defined features of the face, the characteristic that would become a trademark of his drawing style.

Eventually Merritt identified each drawing directly below the profile with the bracketed names of the personalities from popular culture that he had depicted. His ideas come from hours of regular television viewing, memories of working as a custodian in a movie theater and drive-in, images from TV magazines, as well as his daily experience. Though Merritt's idiosyncratic line quality often makes the popular figure unrecognizable, there is usually a characteristic feature, in addition to his bracketed label, that identifies the person. His characteristic labeling of each drawing eventually included not only the name of the personality, but the date that the drawing was completed, together with a date one or two years into the future. "Gene's Art's Inc's" typically appears at the bottom where it has been painstakingly drawn like all the line elements in his work.

In spite of Merritt's skill, his rhythmic, almost metaphoric depiction of American culture and his recent international recognition, it must be acknowledged that potential moral, ethical and/or aesthetic issues are raised as one collects the work of Gene Merritt and attempts to place him in a more public arena. There is a fine line between helping and taking advantage of an artist like Merritt. This line also exists between realizing the true value and nature of his work, and the prospect of colonizing the art and the artist for a cult of artistic personality and the possibility of personal reward.




Gene Merritt, *King is Dead* (detail)/ink and pencil on paper

In the meantime, Merritt continues to produce his "paperwork" seemingly unaffected by his notoriety. Still, there is much to be learned from his art and his creative posture. In the years to come, this will be the task of a few curators, artists and art historians in this state and in Europe. Whether or not other members of the South Carolina arts community, beyond the State Museum, recognize the work of Gene Merritt remains to be seen. In all likelihood, it will have little consequence to the artist or his acceptance elsewhere. What remains unquestionable is the fact that Merritt is an extraordinary artist creating a unique vision which reveals a modernist tradition much larger than the boundaries of his personal experience.

*Tom Stanley is an artist and director of Winthrop University Galleries.*

# EDWARD RICE

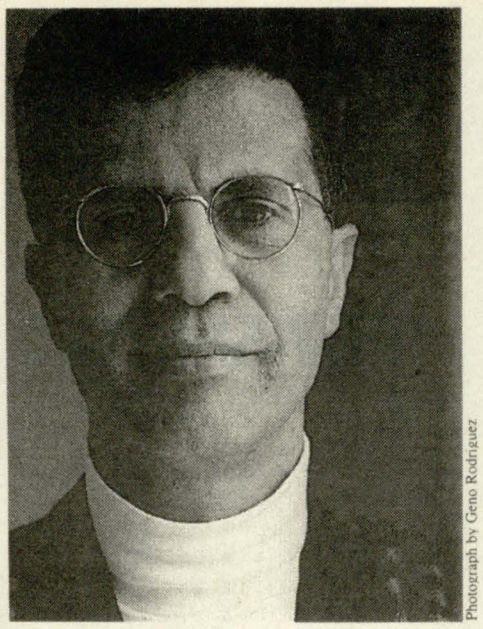
## *Architectural Works 1978-1998*

*Rudolph Lee Gallery*
*Clemson University*
*Clemson, SC*
***October 29 - November 25 1998***

*Gibbes Museum of Art*
*Charleston, SC*
***January 21 - March 14 1999***

*Gertrude Herbert Institute of Art*
*Augusta, GA*
***March 19 - May 14 1999***

# THE BALKANIZATION OF THE AMERICAN CULTURE



Photograph by Geno Rodriguez

Geno Rodriguez

Although issues of equality have been a constant source of conflict in our society, my country - the United States of America - has promoted itself, globally, as a nation of equality. On the assumption that we are equal citizens, we should then be able to share a common culture equally.

History and our multi-racial/ethnic society have jointly created our common culture. The notion of a common American culture conjures up pride and anxiety in us - pride because there is much to be proud of and anxiety because this country's history is currently being re-written. In school, we were taught that Admiral Perry was the first to reach the North Pole. As Americans, we were proud of such an accomplishment. Now, we go through anxiety because the new "revisionist" history tells us that the North Pole was co-discovered by Admiral Perry and Matthew Henson, an American of color. We do not know where all this re-writing of history will take us or how much of our national pride we will have to share.

Nonetheless, I believe that a continuously unfolding common culture exists which, until recently, has been defined from a male Eurocentric perspective. This perspective has excluded Americans of color from perceived cultural worth. The culture we hold most in common; the culture of mother, apple pie and Coca Cola and all that this implies - barbecues on the back lawn, baseball on Sundays, cars, etc., is real. This culture binds us as a nation whether we are partial to all or none of these things.

The earlier historical perspective on culture insists on separating us by race, ethnic origin, gender, region and of course, by economic class. Today, the seeming acceptance of an America - diverse and rich in its pluralism - has changed our perception of who we are and what exactly our common culture might be. This acknowledgment allows us a wonderful opportunity to examine and redefine culture.

One way of re-defining culture is to examine the status of artists of color in this country. Up until the 1960s, the norm in Euro-American society was the domination of the Caucasian male; everyone else took a subordinate posture. Usually shunned and passed over by traditional institutions in the past, artists of color are, today, receiving some critical attention. Good examples of these artists are Lorna Simpson, David Hammons, Ming Fay, Mel Chin, Luis Cruz Azaceta and Jamie Palacios. Unfortunately, the attention is generally given only when these artists create works about politics, racism, roots or ethnic pride. Reviews usually refer to the artist's race and thereby qualify it as "special."

Attention, when given, is based on socio-political content or political correctness rather than professional competence. Eventually, like Matthew Henson, younger and newly recognized artists such as Nari Ward, Nyland Blake, Mei Ling Hom and others will take their rightful place as contributors to the larger, more inclusive common American cultural legacy.

With a renewed and particularly loud call for equality (including cultural parity in the early 70s) hopes for a truly diverse culture seemed possible. For a while, some of us thought it would come to be until the "balkanization" of America began and with it the era of political correctness. As it was in their interest, the "old guard" encouraged this "balkanization" plan for the disenfranchised as a way of keeping them from their institutional doorsteps. Soon, it was politically correct to set up exclusive institutions for ethnic groups; programs for the "victimized" and grants for Hyphenated-Americans.

In the artworld, ethnocentric museums,"special" grants and exhibitions were demanded and received by those previously left out of the loop. Artistic achievements by the dis-enfranchised became separate from the body of Eurocentric American art and, therefore, reduced to a status of second class or, better yet, hyphenated art. Segregation by acquiescence became culturally, socially and politically acceptable. With few courageous visionaries to fight the good fight for true inclusion by all into the mainstream of American art, cultural equality bit the dust. This resulted in the "multicultural society" of the 80s and 90s.

The politically correct "balkanization" of our society continues today. The big question is - how has this worked out in terms of our culture, the arts and the artists who, in part, create our culture? Things have gotten better but not much better. Multiculturalism still separates us from each other. Yes, there are Hyphenated-American art collections that did not exist in the past. There are ethnic-specific exhibitions of artists of color who create work which has a socio-political content specific to their race. There are special panels on African-American art, Hispanic-American art and so forth. Yes, there is a greater awareness of diverse cultures among the American people, but can you remember the last time you saw an exhibition in a major museum of art by a person of color that focused solely on aesthetic content? How many critics of color write for prestigious papers like the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*? How often do you see a major review of art by a non-Western artist that doesn't refer to the artist racial otherness? How many curators in major institutions do you know who are descendants of non-Europeans? In the past we, the other Americans, were segregated. Now we segregate ourselves as a means of being minor league players in hyphenated exhibitions and hyphenated museums. After all, it is better than being completely ignored or left out of the picture.

Foundations, government and corporations continue to commission studies about inclusion and equality, but their efforts remain the same - they "provide the fish but never the fishing rod." Why should they when they are told that "white people do not understand our culture." How can we expect acceptance into their philharmonic orchestras, their major museums or their corps de ballet when we conversely "do not understand their culture."

If we continue to separate ourselves from the herd, we will not be equal. Or, will we be equal but separate (something I thought Brown v. the Board of Education took care of a long time ago)? Since it is not likely that sudden wealth will come to dis-enfranchised Americans, it is not likely that we will exercise in the arts the power of the major institutions. These institutions belong to all Americans. So why not seek out that equality which is our birthright and become part of the whole.

*Geno Rodriguez is an architect of ideas. He served on the Clinton/Gore Presidential Transition Team for Arts and Humanities and is Founder and Director of the Alternative Museum in New York City. The Alternative Museum is a "gateway" institution that accepts all artists, equally, regardless of race/ethnicity and introduces them into the mainstream artworld as professional artists.*

# REINSERTING NATURE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

The reinsertion of nature in contemporary art is the result of a confluence of a variety of concerns and trends over the last thirty years. On a fundamental level, the reaction against the restraints of late modernist painting, minimalism and conceptualism opened the way for a reevaluation of many possibilities that had been purged from the arena of the avant-garde by mid-century. Out of the rupture within the theoretical fabric of late modern art emerged a reexploration of the relationship between art and nature, a direction that has remained one of the most fertile currents of contemporary culture.

*Natural Dialogue* - Alfio Bonanno

In breaking with the traditional mimetic function of representation, modern art began a trajectory that would gradually reduce the role of nature from progenitor to symbol, eventually banishing any reference to the natural order in a hermetic stance of art-for-art's sake. The modern artist's attitude toward nature was filtered through the prism of abstraction, a process of drawing away from nature, enthroning the subjectivity of the artist and defining the work as the expression of this creative subjectivity. When asked by Andre Malreaux about a landscape painting in 1908, Picasso's response was, "...I never paint from nature. My trees are myself,"[1] an attitude which prefigured Jackson Pollock's answer to a question about the role of nature in his work two decades later; his reply, "I am Nature."[2] The gulf that gradually developed between art and perception from the 1880's to the 1950's resulted in the gradual demotion of nature as a source of inspiration for the avant-garde artist, a position most clearly stated in the writings of American critic Clement Greenberg. To borrow a phrase from Ad Reinhardt, Greenberg argues that art is art and life is life. Nature was clearly for him a part of life, not art; and he felt that for a truly authentic experience we should look directly to nature rather than an artist's representation of nature. Adam Gopnik has recently pointed out the the practical result of Greenberg's authoritative stance was the "forcing of two generations of realists to live in basements and pass still-lifes around like samizdat, and [he] generally tracked down all the art world's wild geese and clubbed them."[3] The success of the restrictive proscriptions of Greenberg and his followers set the stage for a powerful backlash in the 1970's that opened the way for the reevaluation of the relationship between art and nature that continues today.

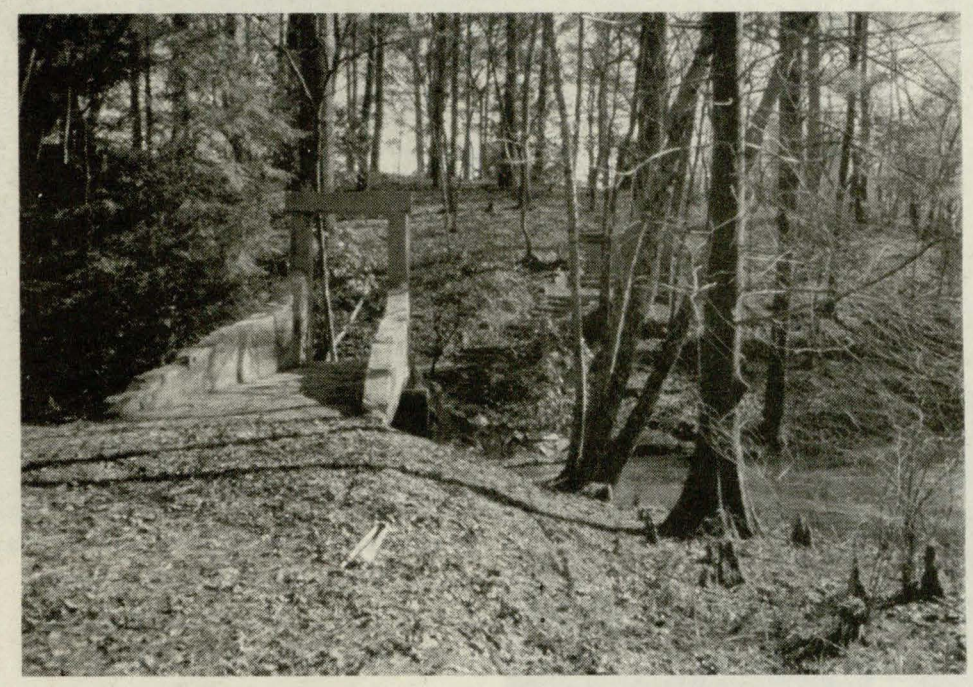
Another important impulse to reexploration of nature in contemporary art came from the drive to define art forms that could not be easily commodified within the cozy economy of the art system. The desire to bypass the "white box" of a clearly defined, and to some sterile, gallery and museum space was attractive on several levels. For an era that valued daring novelty, the idea of making site-specific work in the landscape appealed to those that felt it necessary to move beyond the confines of both the traditional art object and the arena within which the artist works. Site work also offered the opportunity to redefine the relationship between work and audience and rapidly demonstrated the ability to reach non-traditional audiences. Not the least important of these impulses was the growing concern with the damage that unbridled industrialization has done to the natural order. The ability of art to reconnect with nature and address issues at the heart of the environmental debate became one of the sustaining factors and contributed to the lasting quality of nature-based work.

Writing on recent trends in 1979, Rosiland Krauss noted that "...surprising things have come to be called sculpture." In an essay by the same title, she identifies "sculpture in an expanded field"[4] as an important trend that is rewriting the boundaries of contemporary sculpture. For her

the autonomy of modern sculpture had been gained at the cost of losing the grounding of traditional commemorative sculpture, leaving the object in a state of sitelessness or homelessness. The nomadic quality of modern art is overturned in site-work, creating a new approach that sits between the disciplines of landscape architecture, sculpture and architecture. Here, in the expanded field, the activity of sculpture enters a realm of possibility rather than strictures, and one again finds grounding and context within place. In order to be fully understood as a gestalt, the new context of the expanded field must be directly experienced in its ever changing totality, rather than presented as image.

The site-specific nature-based sculpture project at Clemson University builds on many of the important precedents that have evolved out of the exploration of the expanded field. The idea of moving art beyond the confines of the gallery context, the importance of reaching a non-traditional audience, and the multidisciplinary approach inherent in site work are foundational concepts consistent with the mission of a land grant university in the rural South. Working within the frame of the South Carolina Botanical Garden, our fledgling project has come to share values, methods, and even artists with other, primarily European, projects.[5] In shaping an artist driven program that addresses the dialogue between art, science and nature, the project opens a public arena inviting dialogue on both a formal and informal level that breaches traditional boundaries of disciplines and audiences.

The five pieces currently in place reflect a variety of approaches and materials. In 1994, Charleston sculptor Herb Parker built the first



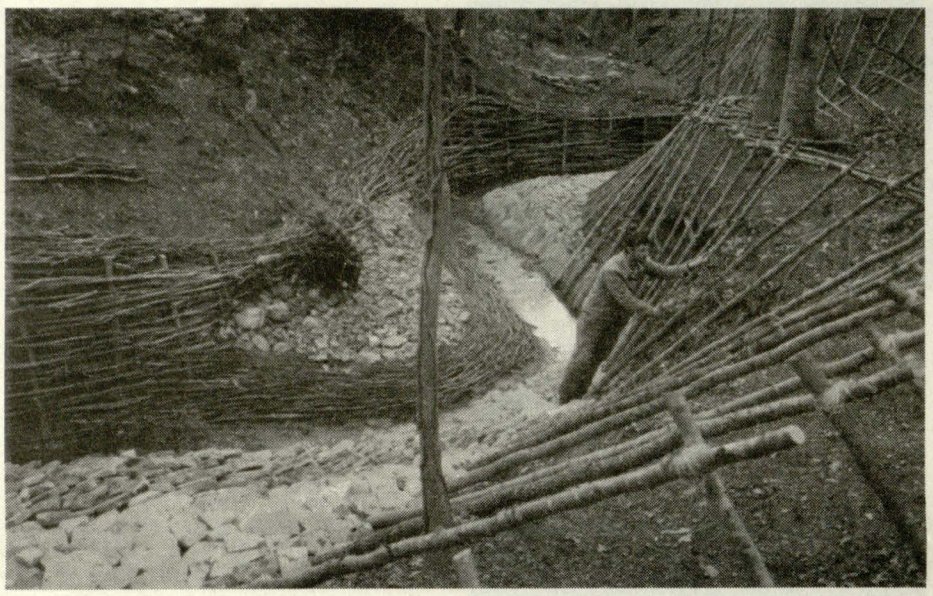
*Bridge* - Brian Rust

piece, *Crucible*, of stone and cement covered with earth and plants. Nestled into a steep slope along a stream running through the spine of the garden, his aim was to create an external space that would meld with the environment and a meditative interior space that is at once sheltering and inviting. The inspiration for this sculpture was drawn from a variety of sources, ancient to contemporary, both Western and non-Western, and is intended to reflect seasonal change through a stance of aesthetic non-assertion.

The second piece, *Sittin' Pretty* by Patrick Doughtery of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, sits in the

*Sittin' Pretty* - Patrick Dougherty

*Crucible* - Herb Parker



*The Stream Bed* - Gilles Bruni and Marc Barbaritt

wildflower meadow in the south of the Garden and was directly inspired by Bramante's High Renaissance building The Tiempetto in Rome, Italy. Built from dogwood and maple saplings woven together it creates a dense fabric. The work is woven around thirty-six living trees that will grow as the actual structure decays and returns to the earth.

Augusta, Georgia sculptor Brian Rust's *Earthen Bridge* responded to the utilitarian concerns of spanning a shallow pool of water that feeds the pond on the north side of the Garden. Working with an adobe clay mixture on a wooden armature, the artist intends for his work to appear as a poetic fragment that is both functional and metaphoric. Acting as both bridge and gateway, Rust's earthen structure reopened an area of the Garden that had been inaccessible for over ten years, when an earlier bridge was removed.

Danish artist Alfio Bonanno's piece, *Natural Dialogue* is a dome-like construction of oak limbs and stones. Sited along an oxbow turn on the South end of the central creek his work is an evocative outdoor room that invites comparison to ancient European sites. In evoking the mystery associated with ancient work, Bonnano's piece synthesizes his concerns for the integrity of natural materials, his response to the specifics of site and the goal of reframing the viewer's response as part of the ever changing dialogue.

French artists Gilles Bruni and Marc Barbarit constructed the most recent piece, *The Stream Bed*, in February 1998. Working in their usual collaborative counterpoint, their work is a complex skin that traces the undulating stream at the rear of the garden. Bruni chose the west bank and used vertical wooden elements and flagstone, while Barbarit, working on the opposite ban, used horizontal wooden elements and rough quartz stones gathered on site. The steps at each end invite the viewer to enter the piece and marks the vanishing point of the work conceived as a large perspectival construction. Plantings on both banks will complete the project.

Nature-based art has earned a secure place alongside traditional art forms over the past two decades in the pluralistic environment of contemporary art. As one of many viable approaches available to artists, site-work has moved beyond the sheer novelty of context, materials and scale to become a marker in the unfolding discussion concerning the man-made and the realm of nature. The attraction for many artists and viewers is not very different than the simple idea that motivated pioneering artist Robert Smithson to write "...I am for an art that takes into account the direct effects of the elements as they exist from day to day apart from representation... Nature does not proceed in a straight line, it is a rather sprawling development. Nature is never finished."[6] Herein lies possibility.

The site-specific, nature-based sculpture project at the South Carolina Botanical Garden is a partnership between the Rudolph E. Lee Gallery, The Department of Landscape Architecture and the South Carolina Botanical Garden, Clemson University.

*David Houston is the Director of the Rudolph E. Lee Gallery, College of Arts, Architecture and Humanities, Clemson University.*

Notes

[1] John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, Volume 1, p. 93.

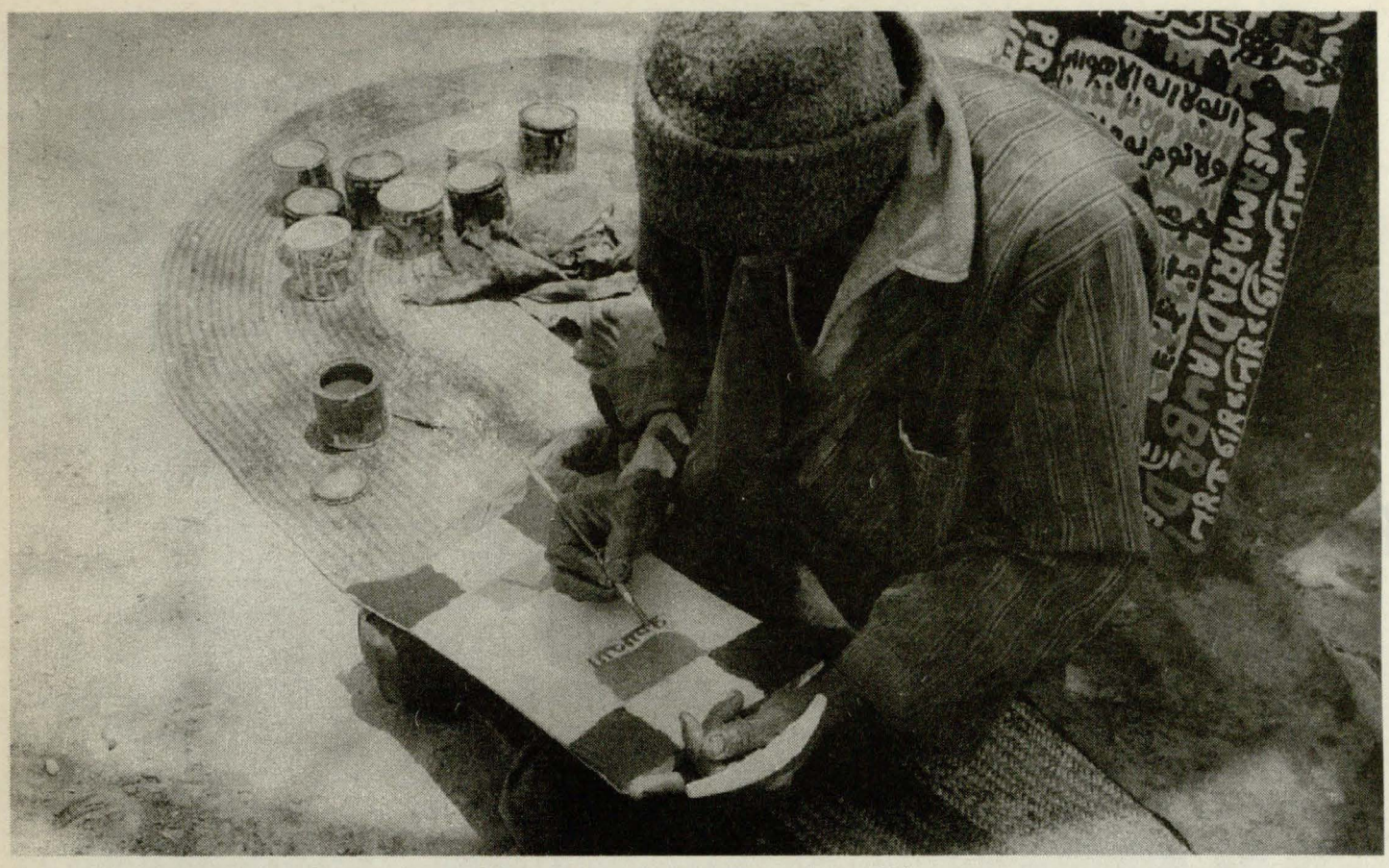
[2] cf. Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture*.

[3] Adam Gopnick, "The Power Critic," *New York Magazine*, March 16, 1998, p.70.

[4] Rosiland Krauss, "Sculpture in an Expanded field," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernists Myths*, p. 277.

[5] Most of the artists in the project have worked in European projects at Ticon in Denmark, Arte Sella in Italy and .... of Trilogy: Art, Nature, Science; Kunsthallen Brandts Klaedefabrick, Odense; Odense Botanical Garden, Copenhagen and Ticon, Langsland, Denmark, 1996.

[6] Robert Smithson, "Cultural Confinement," *Flash Art XXI Years*, p.17.



Malam Zabeyrou painting koranic boards outside his home in Maradi, Niger (West Africa), 1996

# THE PAINTED KORANIC BOARDS OF MALAM ZABEYROU

African art is often recognized for being both visually striking and spiritually potent. While carved wooden masks and figures are the types of art objects we usually associate with Africa, less known are the works which challenge these Western-imposed notions of what African art can or should be. Such is the case with the painted koranic boards of Malam Zabeyrou, an artist whose work was included in last fall's *Fear Not Forever* exhibition at the Winthrop University Galleries, and has also been featured in *Revue Noire*, a journal dedicated to contemporary art of Africa. A Muslim scholar who lives in Niger, West Africa, Zabeyrou has become internationally recognized for his work - objects which transcend their more typical function to express deeply-held beliefs and lived experience.

While koranic boards are generally used throughout the Muslim world as a kind of writing tablet on which individuals read and write Arabic verses in ink from the Koran (the holy book of Islam), Zabeyrou instead chooses to use brightly-colored enamel paint in a unique compositional layout which draws attention to the messages of his boards. Like the Bible, verses from the Koran are seen by Muslims as the Word of God (or Allah). Indeed, for Muslims the Word is God, and these boards (and the act of writing on them) are seen as sacred works. Thus by using the koranic board format, and referencing the religious authority of Islam via holy verses in Arabic, Zabeyrou is deliberately tapping into the spiritual vitality of this rich and historic tradition.

This strategy draws attention to the subject of his boards, a combination of Arabic, English, and French words which make reference to a particular governmental injustice suffered by the artist. Because this event occurred on the eve of the arrival of George Bush (then Vice-President on official visit to Niger in 1985), Bush's name, along with other key words and phrases which evoke this event, frequently make an appearance on these boards.

Zabeyrou is, thus, using these works, within an already established religious framework, to create an ongoing discourse - a discourse which he hopes will communicate the truth behind this injustice, and thereby elevate God's name. In the end, these works ultimately testify to the power inherent in such objects, and to the ways in which an artist can transform common items into works of art which are truly dynamic, both visually and conceptually. A selection of Zabeyrou's koranic boards will be featured in an upcoming exhibition at the Winthop University Galleries in the spring of 1999, and will be available for travel beginning in the summer of 1999.

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# FIGURATIVE ART IN THE MODERN AGE

With the ascendance of modernism, and especially in the post-World War II period, art in the twentieth-century had demonstrated a separation of art from its audience. This disconnection can be simply defined as a movement in which the artist explores his/her own issues free from interpretation in a conventional manner as information content relevant to the audience. Prior to modernism, art was directed to convey information to its audience based on the interests of specific patrons or institutions.

It is true, of course, that many artists prior to modernism embedded their own issues in their work. However, as artists in the modern period became increasingly free to explore themes on their own, especially pan-human complex themes related to personal, socio-economic, and political issues which sprang from their own experiences, the ability for a mass audience to interpret their work was relegated to the high priests and priestesses of the art world — curators, dealers, and collectors.

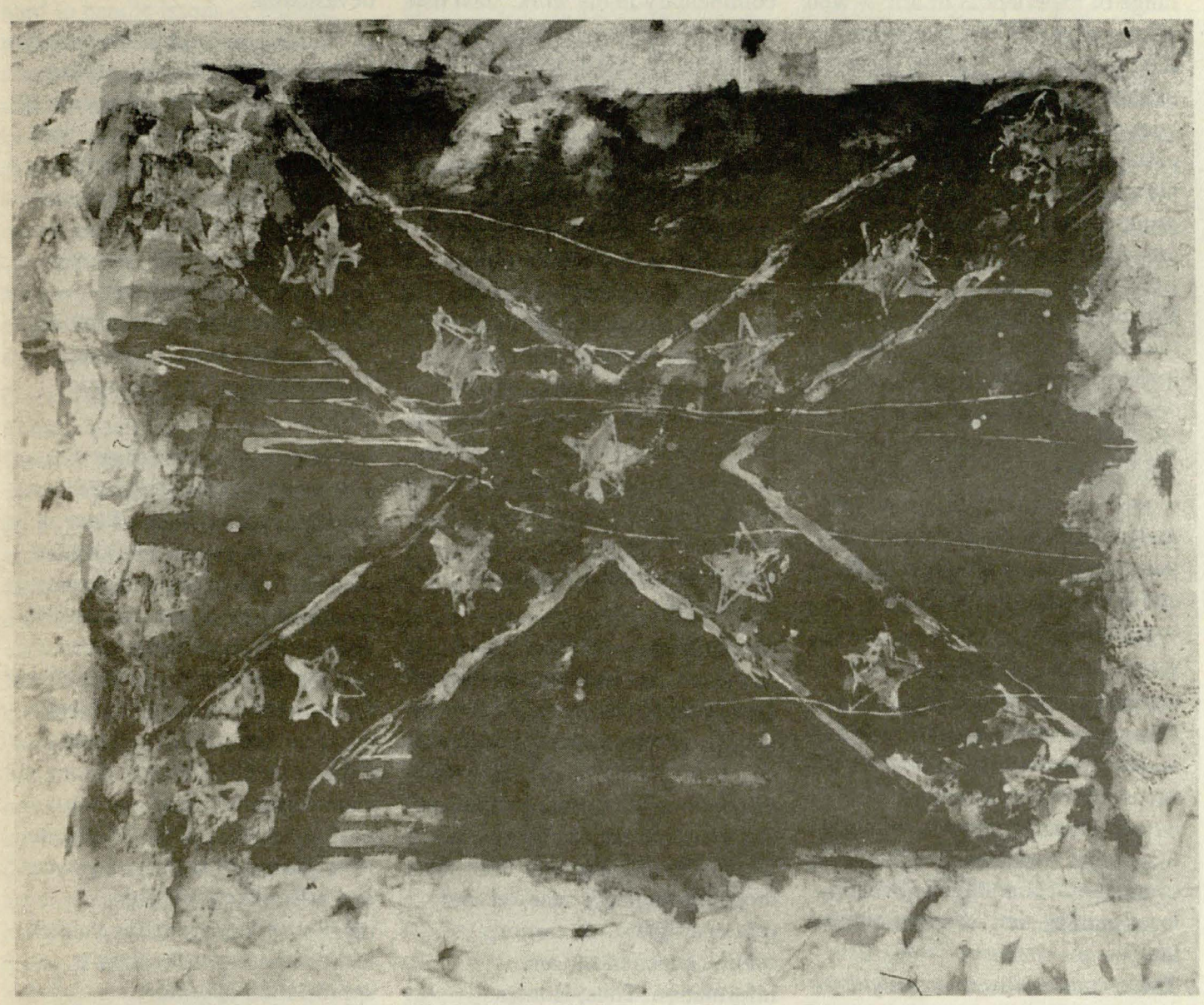
Perhaps because of their concentration in urban areas, artists in the twentieth century have acted as barometers, as well as translators. Neither function works particularly well, however, unless the audience can read the information presented. Although these statements, for some, would appear to be a gross over-simplification of the art versus audience issue, it is not easy to argue that Kandinsky, Lee Krasner, Agnes Martin, and Elizabeth Murray were as accessible to their audience as, for example, the Hudson River School of late nineteenth century American artists were to their audience.

As a specific current within this development, I have been particularly intrigued with the role of figuration in the modern age, especially, again, in the last fifty years since World War II. With the notable exception of a few heroes to figurative painters, such as Alfred Leslie, figuration has been largely absent. Since I first began considering figurative work as an issue approximately ten years ago, I have noticed very little in the way of figuration "showing up" in galleries, museum exhibitions, and professional art publications. Again, there are exceptions such as Martha Mayer Erlebacher, Lucien Freud, Susan Rothenberg, and Eric Fischl. However, very recently I have noticed that figuration seems to be on the comeback. The question is why and is this trend indicative of a return to a closer connection between art and audience?

The return of figuration at the cusp of the new millennium would seem to herald a return to a con-nectedness with the audience. I propose this because the late twentieth century media-saturated information age has given audiences ample opportunities for exposure to and comprehension of complex issues that in previous times might have only been able to be expressed through art. All of the high troubles of the twentieth century - anxiety, alienation, de-humanization, etc. were quite accurately depicted in art throughout the period. Only in the last half of the century, however, has the vernacular of these "troubles" become common in all information media and, therefore, if not totally comprehensible, at least familiar, to the general audience. The new figuration trend may indicate a fuller integration of the artist with audience; that is, an era where the artist is working congruently with the audience's ability to com-prehend the work.

Using the figure at this point in time would seem to be com-forting the audience with the notion that the artist has returned to the fold, if you will. A pre-new millennium feeling of hope and excitement, coupled with a sense of relief in having survived the most dangerous century for life on the planet, may be at the core of the new figuration. The figure elevates the human being, glorifies humanity, and essentially includes the audience of humans. The audience is relieved to find themselves in new figuration. The figure makes the work comprehensible and familiar.

*Peggy Rivers is an artist and instructor in 2-D Design at Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC.*



Leo Twiggs, *Commemorations Series II, Flag I*, 1996, batik, 29" x 35", Collection of Dr. Norrece T. Jones

# DIASPORA: TRADITION & INNOVATION IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN ART

## *The Transformation of Image and Culture*

An artist communicates with his or her audience through a series of symbolic and metaphorical signs that reveal thought process, intelligence, cultural awareness and technical expertise. These signs are required, however, to signify more than themselves, and may allude to events, ideas, emotions, or concepts beyond the image, object, musical work, theatrical presentation or performance specifically shared by the artist with the audience. Indeed, the artist's signs may evoke, in many instances, the most essential experiences of the artist's personal history as well as reflecting larger social issues inclusive of, yet beyond the full understanding of the artist/ messenger who records, explains, ridicules, and entertains using them. This power of metaphor infuses communicative authority into the artist's work despite the artist's intention for a work. Whether a given artist wishes his or her work to serve as an essentially functional or decorative object, or if the work is intended to be primarily expressive, the audience before whom artworks may be shown will react to the works not based on the expertise or intention of the artist, but based on their ability to appreciate the artist's skill, message and meaning.

Cultural diversity affects our capacity for understanding each other, and certainly, creators of artworks are especially affected by the capability of their audience to "receive" their messages, especially if their iconography (or symbolic language) is very personal or culture-specific. Assembling an exhibition of artworks using the common ground of racial or ethnic derivation does not at all guarantee that the artists who may share a common ethnic or racial heritage, will also share similar experiences or modes of communicating their ideas. This was especially evident in the *Diaspora* exhibition, which presented a wide range of styles, subjects and approaches to self-expression, reflective of the broad

range of experiences of artists who share ancestral links to continental Africa. Certainly, if there is such diversity within this group with a common thread of ancestral and cultural linkage, even greater diversity will exist outside of this group among the audience intended to attend this exhibition. Consequently, some works in the *Diaspora* exhibition were difficult to understand and perhaps therefore to appreciate. This was not a detraction, in fact, this is the objective of presenting such an exhibition, for art is not intended to protect us from life, or merely to decorate our environment. Art transforms us — for good or ill — and nourishes our intellectual consciousness.

While some images and craft traditions represented in the *Diaspora* exhibition offered direct associations with African traditions, other works were pervaded by contemporary popular cultural experience by showing influences of modern technology, television, local politics, and information on the personal history of the artists. These contrasts were employed as a strength, intentionally juxtaposing disparate works to challenge the separation of "Art" and "craft" categorizations.

For example, Omari Fox creates graphic works that unapologetically present the overwhelming influence of popular culture in his aesthetic. This is an intentional commentary on how culture interacts with personality in shaping experience for the post-modern generation of art makers. Influenced by rebel graffiti and the aesthetics of *l'art brut* (loosely translated as "art of the streets"), Fox's images are bursting with verve, sometimes announcing his presence with sometimes explosive energy. Pop-culture heroes (musicians, athletes, religious and political figures) vie for attention in his fictive space with an aesthetic presence influenced by the graphic qualities of spray paint and comic book imagery. This is art with a voice of independence, self-assertion and self-definition that well represents the creative drive of the hip-hop generation. Often, Fox includes literary expositions, rhymes, stories, and commentary in his work, such that visual and verbal expression are united into a coherent image of direct communicative power.

Among the works shown, Terry Hunter's compellingly dark images (in the philosophical as well as the material and aesthetic sense of darkness) are especially rich, profoundly layered with visual puns and allusions to colloquial sayings, popular phrases, and photograph-influenced, graphic imagery. Hunter's imagery forms a collective impact that is consistent in its vision and representative of a point of view which strikes a particularly responsive chord within the African-American community.

Hunter's images are considerations of the tension often created by the marketing of commercial products (and people), and the distortion of events in "sound bites" suited to the needs of broadcast journalism and entertainment programs, but are also a questioning of how the receptive audience receives and processes these "distortions" of events, experiences, and information. Thus, Hunter questions our collective conceptual awareness and understanding of the cultural assumptions and clichés that the limitations of television broadcast media and modern, instant communication must create as a by-product of their format and marketing necessity. Thus, in the two versions of the *Bootstraps* series, a Yale key triggers allusions both to the Yale lock and key manufacturer and the idea that knowledge (implied by this allusion to Yale University) is the key to self-empowerment. Consequently, one figure is "pulling himself up by his bootstraps" the metaphorical expression for overcoming adverse circumstances with self-determination. However, the other *Bootstraps* has no boots, thus, he must lift himself from his present state by painfully mutilating his Achilles tendons. This is, of course a metaphor for those individuals who are so impoverished and downtrodden that conventional methods of self-improvement are virtually inapplicable to their socio-cultural devastation.

In Hunter's portrait of his history-making spouse, Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter, Democrat, he presents the figure as larger than life, reflective and thoughtful; an interesting interpretive approach which precedes her meteoric career in political life, recently becoming the first African-American woman to be Minority Party Leader in the House of South Carolina's Democratic Caucus.

In Charleston artist and art educator Damond Howard's painting entitled *Secret Place*, a serenely calm river flows beside cool shade trees and tall grasses in a familiar low-country scene. The lush setting implies the place-specific sentiments of native South Carolinians and our enjoyment of the local land and its richness. Howard reminds us that we are all from somewhere and our connection to the earth itself anchors us to places, to secrets, to privacy and self-reflection. This meditative work is richly painted and demonstrates the artist's appreciation of texture, composition and shape.

Colin Quashie is an artist of this time. The controversy surrounding the Battle Flag of the Confederacy which flies defiantly above South Carolina's State Capitol building engenders precisely the form of polemic exchange in which he feels most at ease and this issue is a part of his works presented in *Diaspora*. Quashie's wry, ironic, and irreverent art works are especially timely, forcing his audience to consider difficult cultural problems which they may often prefer to avoid. In this Post-modern era, Quashie's highly political art may be categorized as "conceptual" and "journalistic." Artistically and aesthetically, much of his work is closely allied to the ideals of the Pop Art Movement of the 1960s & 70s. However, the subject matter he presents is radically different from the topics explored in the earlier Pop Art genre. What is singular about a "Quashie" point of view? What does this Charleston-based iconoclast have that demands our attention?

Quashie's artworks face off against

hard to handle issues of culture, politics, and race with a self-conscious awareness that often offends (or at least disturbs) blacks, whites and "others." He discriminates with equality and equanimity. Quashie raises hard questions but often the issues are camouflaged in pop-culture imagery and a form of Warhol-esque flashiness which confounds as it derides the spectator.

Operating in the tradition of the French avant-garde artists, Quashie challenges the status quo mentality. His works often play upon various popular stereotypes, and ridicule irrational cultural assumptions to trigger an awareness of our personal limits in understanding each other's daily life experiences. Functioning through the use of positive "social" anger, fed by his frustration with the vision of the masses — a vision which he hopes to help reshape and determine — Quashie uses his artwork to raise questions that involve scrutinizing the power bases of our social system, causing us to examine our collective political perceptions. The Quashie point of view makes its mark by challenging us to be more thoughtful, more expressive and more aware.

Quashie's consideration of social criticism, history, popular culture and contemporary issues may inevitably engender polemic reaction. This exchange of differing opinions creates opportunities for transformation and intellectual growth. As members of a 'free' society, we must each take responsibility for our thought processes and use caution to prevent conservative paternalism from stunting meaningful inquiry, discussion and dialogue.

Art cannot (and perhaps, should not) serve to protect the spectator from Life, rather the role of the artist in many cultures is to communicate and express ideas that will challenge the viewer's perceptions and heighten a cultural awareness of the world we share.

In our society, founded on the premise that freedom of expression is an essential right, it is a great privilege and pleasure to be able to present the works of artists whose compelling approach to subject matter forces us all to consider and re-consider who and what we are and what our individual decisions contribute to the cultural matrix in which we must participate. Certainly, Quashie's works seem to demand that we realize how we create the perceptions that are the social, spiritual, and intellectual ambient in which we must function.

Quashie's large, acrylic on canvas work entitled, *Looked Away, Looked Away, Looked Away...Dixieland: Strom's Song*, is an homage to the power and influence of Southern politician, Strom Thurmond and functions as a statement on the controversy surrounding the use of the naval jack or Battle Flag of the Confederacy as part of an official triumvirate of emblems included atop the domed cupola of the State Capitol Building. Use of the Battle Flag, a symbol most frequently identified with the failed Southern Confederacy, above an operating governmental body, supposedly assembled to represent the interests of all South Carolinians, is a topic of considerable debate within the state. Quashie has superimposed the Battle Flag onto a portrait of Senator Thurmond who represents quintessential old-guard Southern political ideals. His looming presence suggests his pervasive influence within the political machinery of the state. The inclusion of two images of lynched black men, who are incorporated into Thurmond's portrait, is an evocation of the tyranny of human enslavement endorsed by the Confederacy as a viable economic choice.

This tyranny of rule by race that upheld the Southern economy adversely affected the social order of Southern life because of its dependence upon formal separation of the races, often by means of intimidation tactics such as public lynching and other brutalizing methodologies. Ironically, Strom Thurmond was instrumental in eliminating the lynching of blacks in South Carolina during his term as governor and he refused to countenance this particular form of social injustice, despite maintaining a strong allegiance to traditional, Southern, racially separatist values. This political image portrays Senator Glenn McConnell (district 41), who was cooperating with South Carolina State Senator Robert Ford on a flag compromise proposal; Lt. Governor Nick Theodore who has not published a position on the flag issue; Senator Robert Ford of Charleston who sought to make a compromise featuring a separate emblem for blacks; the anonymous political filler is the embodiment of compromise. He is radio personality Dan Moon with WTMA in Charleston — a lowcountry conservative, Republican, morning talk-show — who represents that aspect of the South Carolina populace who wish to maintain the symbol, but who think of the flag as a non-issue; United States Senator from South Carolina, Fritz Hollings, whose position on retention of the Battle Flag is unknown; South Carolina Senator John Courson, who offered a compromise to retain the flag as a heritage symbol on the State House grounds; David Beasely, Republican gubernatorial incumbent, who most recently made a modest effort to "move the flag to a place of honor;" arch-conservative, Christian party supported United States Congressman, Arthur Ravenel, who avoids discussing the flag issue; Tommy Hartnett, former United State Congressman under President Reagan and former South Carolina gubernatorial candidate; and South Carolina's former Governor, Carroll Campbell, who supported keeping the flag aloft, but who appeared willing to follow the directives of the legislature regarding the flag issue. Why the flag of a defeated government which was hostile to the United States of America should continue to fly over the sovereign state of South Carolina's legislative body is a difficult question that seems no closer to being answered now than when this image was painted more than five years ago.

Leo Twiggs' successful employment of batik as a communicative medium rather than as a decorative craft device characterizes the unique quality of his work. Expressive manipulation of this ancient, wax dye-resist technique, which dates to Egyptian cultural antiquity, to investigate issues of history and heritage, creates extraordinary, irony-filled implications in his oeuvre which stem from the medium per se, in combination with his often Afro-centrist subject matter.

Formal affinities with his mentor-teachers, Hale Woodruff and Arthur Rose, are sometimes evident in Twiggs' images by virtue of his progressively exotic, tertiary palette, innovative use of color and form, and precarious balancing of abstract and figurative elements. Despite the consistently representational content of Twiggs' images (for his are always paintings of something) compositional arrangement, spontaneity, and control, not figuration are the principal aesthetic issues that he emphasizes. Thus, the figures who populate his canvases are more significant as elements of composition and abstracted embodiments of social concepts rather than as representational renderings of particular personalities.

Motifs of youth and age, looming and powerful mother icons, images of old men and of regional culture, presented as a means toward telegraphing ideas of universal significance, are devices Twiggs uses with authority and ingenuity to create formal and aesthetic contributions in batik painting unlike those of any other American painter. While his subject matter is often centered in an African-American sub-cultural context and may incorporate principally African-American imagery, the essential themes of life, decay, death and renewal or the interweaving of literary and intellectual concepts — in what often appear at first as deceptively simplistic visual images — constitutes his forte.

In paintings from his early series

Cecil Williams, *Three Flags over South Carolina*, c. 1961, silver gelatin print

of the 1970s, entitled *Commemorations*, Twiggs' images of the naval battle jack of the Confederacy raise a plethora of ideas and issues pertaining to the heritage of Americans of African descent and their position in the culture of the South, specifically, and in America as a whole. The inherently faded, aged, folded and crinkled quality of the medium of batik, elicits a series of conceptual associations regarding perception of this particular commemorative device; i.e. the Confederate flag, its symbolism, antiquity, and continued iconographic importance and ideological value in the South for its allusions to racial injustice, obtuse social values and the intricately paradoxical relationships that have evolved from the Southern/ American experience and its institutions (specifically, the institutionalized trading in human beings - slavery). Thus, Twiggs' batik paintings, by using a traditional African craft form in an expressive context, examine both the losses of the Southerner of European heritage as well as the cultural losses of the African-American in the *Commemorations* group. This examination of loss is accomplished in part by means of his medium, as well as through choice of subject matter, for the survival of this African craft form is a metaphor for the survival of the African-American and the sub-cultural traditions retained from an African past, subsumed (sometimes almost invisibly) into the larger American cultural conglomerate.

Another of Twiggs' series that pertains to the African-American experience, the *We Have Known Rivers* group of paintings, is concerned with the foundations of civilization, cultural dispersal, and not only the African diaspora, but also the fragmentation and dissemination of any culture relying on the cyclical nature of our common human experiences.

Simultaneously, he pays homage to the African-American literary and intellectual tradition, specifically, the work of poet Langston Hughes, celebrating a people and a heritage that encompasses all peoples and traditions in the power of its continuity and survival under adverse circumstances. Rivers, as cradles of civilization, are used as a metaphor for the continued flow, transition and movement of human existence.

A new direction in Twiggs works of the 1990s, is his use of the painted assemblage, as in the work, *Birth of the Blues* which conceptually allies itself with the culturally disparate African sacrificial reliquary, and fetish or power figures, which manifest themselves in African-American life in the forms of mojos, the practice of the religion of Voodoo or vudun and working roots, all of which are common in the lowcountry areas.

Twiggs' exceptional batik paintings incorporate a socio-political statement on the tenacious survival of a particular ethnic group (African-Americans) as a metaphor for the endurance of humanity. His works demonstrate unusual compositional subtlety, sophistication and visual richness while incorporating his regional experiences and cultural heritage as universal metaphors of the human condition.

In photographer Cecil Williams' work, entitled, *Three Flags Over South Carolina* of c. 1961, shown atop the cupola of the State Capitol Building are three symbols that summarize the issues which led to the Civil Rights Movement; first, the "Stars 'n' Bars" of the United States, a symbol of democratic freedom and the American Constitution; second, the flag of the State of South Carolina, which traditionally has had one of the strongest legislatures advocating state's rights and self-determination; and last, the battle flag of the Confederacy, an emblem taken into battle against the Union during the Civil War, which has become a rallying point for many Southerners of European-descent as a symbol of pride and defiance, while symbolizing enslavement and oppression to many African-Americans. All three symbols continue to fly over South Carolina's legislative body more than thirty years after this photograph was made, despite considerable controversy surrounding the use of the flag of the Confederacy above a government body intended to represent the interests of all South Carolinians.

Similarly, Williams' *Youth Before the State Capitol Building* of c. 1960 offers a poignant reminder of the failed mission of the segregated South Carolina legislature in representing the interests of all of its citizens. This image of a young, African-American boy standing before the State Capitol Building epitomizes the tragedy and hypocrisy of legalized segregation in a society founded on the belief in individual freedom and equality under the law. At the time when this photograph was taken, there were no African-American representatives included in the legislative body housed in this edifice. Williams' image, contrasting the grandeur and scale of the legislative house with the diminutive youth becomes, in fact, a visual statement concerning the rights and needs of the individual contrasted with the sovereignty of the state. Despite the acceptance of the segregated system as legal prior to 1954, the fundamental inadequacy of racial segregation to fully address the needs of all individuals was unavoidable and the system has to be at least partially eradicated through its removal as a legal social option.

In the image of *Civil Rights Protesters Assembled in Prayer*, Downtown Orangeburg of c. 1963, Williams has captured a group of citizens kneeling in prayer

surrounding the green downtown and praying for implementation of fairness and equality of treatment before the law within South Carolina. Non-violent protest in combination with thorough court procedures were effective tools in bringing about the transition from a segregated to a desegregated system and a subsequent increase in opportunities for African-Americans. The well-used compositional device of showing the group in a dramatically receding perspective, implies visually the legacy of generations of African-Americans fighting and waiting, with an extraordinary patience, for "equality."

*Morning Prayer on the Green, Orangeburg, S.C.* c. 1963, another view of the demonstration shown in *Civil Rights Protesters Assembled in Prayer, Downtown Orangeburg*, documents the use of massive non-violent demonstrations of dissatisfaction by African-Americans against the social inequities of segregation, such as the protest by ministers and community members shown in this image which were the grass roots motivators that led to changes in legislation and subsequently to transitions in the social order. Each of the individuals here is indeed a quiet hero who has chosen to make a statement in favor of transforming society. Williams' photograph also captures a poignant, inherent irony, because the group is assembled in prayerful meditation circumnavigating a Confederate Monument (which features the likeness of Captain John Palmer of Orangeburg). Thus, they appear to be praying to the symbolic idol/image of the very source of their social woes (their slave legacy, which Palmer fought to defend). Such an image is a rich statement on the complexity of the South's levels of social and cultural implication.

Another richly ironic image is Williams' photograph of the *Reverend I. De Quincy Newman Being Sworn into The South Carolina State Legislature* c. 1984. As the first American of African descent to serve in the House of Representatives of the South Carolina legislature since the Reconstruction era (he had been preceded in the Senate by Representative I.S. Leevy Johnson and Representative Felder, but was the first African-American in the House following the ousting of blacks in 1985), I. De Quincy Newman had served as Field Administrator for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for many years. As he is sworn in by Lieutenant Governor Michael Daniel, Ann Pauline Hinton, Newman's wife holds the Bible and proudly looks on. The marvelously witty, and accidental twist incorporated into this photograph is the inclusion of the painting depicting John C. Calhoun as a witness to this event. The ominous portrait of the adamantly pro-slavery segregationist, symbolically present as a participant at a scene indictive of the empowerment of blacks through the Democratic process, Calhoun's worst nightmare, gives this work a unique conceptual richness.

Photographer, curator, educator and graphic artist, John Glenn Wright is a native of Hampton, South Carolina. His elliptically allusive photographic images evoke a poetic sensibility and challenge the viewer with their cryptic inferences to the artist's personal history, cultural clichés and a finely honed, wry, and sometimes vicious sense of humor. His *Self-Portrait Number 2* is a commentary on the layers of meaning that the observer may bring to the interpretation of apparently mundane, everyday phenomena. Wright's photograph of a road sign painting, which shows a child running across a non-existent street, portrayed in black silhouette on a yellow background, with the announcement "Children Playing" proclaimed beneath the figure, is a point of departure for a multivalent consideration of the insidiousness of the effects of race on quotidian experience. We are introduced to both the whimsical self-reference by the artist, suggesting that his creative work is his "playtime" and a more subtle suggestion of his African ancestry through the accident of the photographed (anonymous) artist's use of black paint to portray the graphic image of this generic "child"; ironically such a black image would have been used in the formerly segregated South to represent all children playing. The irony of the black image used as a universal symbol is embraced and enjoyed by Wright as a wry commentary on the dynamics of how the employment of this universal image in black paint has eluded the politics of racism in contemporary society. Of course the makers of the image probably, and again ironically, intended for the viewer to interpret this black child as white. These ironies are further exacerbated by the sociological coercion of blacks by Eurocentrists to conform to "white" behavior standards. Thus, the artist shows us an image that is black, but is of a white person. This has been adopted as his self-portrait because it crystallizes the dilemma of the African-American, whose culture and appearance must be influenced to a degree by his or her African ancestry but who is encouraged by Eurocentrist American society to reject Afrocentrist ideals and norms and thus be interpreted as white, which, ironically, blacks can never be.

Wright's photograph entitled, *No Dumping* shows a bullet and buckshot ridden sign which attempts to authoritatively prohibit vandalism of property by warning the reader against leaving abandoned debris at the site. However, in this instance, in fact the declaration against the leaving of debris has evolved into the very trash that it proclaims against. This is a tongue-in-cheek metaphor for the impotence of authority figures who declaim with no means of enforcement. The image is further an indirect reference to the chaos created by individuals who would "dump" on a "no dumping" sign. Such individuals clearly have no respect for authority and thus, instructing them against their illicit activities is merely a hollow and futile exercise.

In *Crossings, Number 3*, Wright treats the anonymity of a daily warning that we often take for granted. This enlarged photographic detail of a crossings emblem, riddled by impact indentations from bullet blasts, is an example of those signs frequently found at bridge crossings or at the narrowing of a roadway. This device is generally used to warn the traveler of the presence of imminent danger; we may plunge off of the bridge to an icy death, or crash upon its barricades. The suggestion of danger is further enhanced by the presence of the indentations left by the impact of bullets shot at the sign's reverse side (metaphorically and literally "shot in the back"); thus, unseen dangers are implied. In addition, the multilevel implications of "crossings" are evoked, as well as ideas such as, cross burnings, bearing a cross, crossing over to the unknown, and eliciting the allusion to those explorers who are willing to cross over into the unknown, acting as human bridges, who reconcile opposing points of view and attempt to bring others to common ground (despite the fact that some factions may wish to maintain separations undisturbed) thus the "crossing" takes on a strongly political overtone.

*School Crossing* is another of Wright's ironic uses of extant imagery with reinterpreted significance. Here, the photographed road sign shows two featureless, anonymous black figures, arm-in-arm, one female, one male, crossing a non-existent street. The figures are carrying books, alluding to their efforts to gain an education, however, the male figure is also suffering from the impressions of two bullet wounds, one on his shoulder, one in his abdomen. Through the inclusion of this detail, this otherwise almost cheerful, anonymous image is suddenly transformed into a commentary on the nonchalance of our collective response, as a nation, to the ubiquitous violence that has insinuated itself into the American educational experience. The image begs the question of how can the American student, condemned to public education, be expected to concentrate with clarity on the primary business of learning in a

battleground where life and limb are imperiled? The spectra of violence undermines the atmosphere needed for serious intellectual development and the stressful ramifications of this hostile and surreal learning environment produces increasing casualties daily. As a teacher, Wright has had to witness and actually encounter students pulled into the vortex of violence with defensive weapons and firearms at school in life-threatening situations. Society is challenged to address this issue by the implied criticism subsumed within this image.

In conclusion, the many different approaches to artistic expression which constitute the *Diaspora* exhibition all have the common denominator of some linkage to African culture via the creators of these works. While many of the artists demonstrate direct dependence on African aesthetics and ideals, others use African referents that are more oblique, or which may even appear at first glance to be non-existent. But the African legacy — aesthetic, cultural, intellectual and creative— lives on in the descendants of those extraordinary individuals who survived the deplorable institution of forced labor. This exhibition is dedicated to their memory - the ancestors who gave each of the participating artists the genetic encoding that drives them to communicate their ideas and conceptions to succeeding generations through their creative work in diverse visual arts.

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